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TIM BURTON'S ED WOOD

PLUS: MAKING
EDWARD
SCISSORHANDS

STAR TREK VII:
GENERATIONS
TIMECOP
STARGATE
ALIEN NATION:
DARK HORIZON

Director Tim Burton,
immortalizing the
maker of PLAN 9
FROM OUTER SPACE

JOHN CARPENTER GETS LOVECRAFTIAN

Volume 25 Number 5



H.P. LOVECRAFT'S

LURKING FEAR

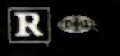
A town's inhabitants have suffered years of terror by grotesque creatures who dwell beneath the local cemetery. Five terrified survivors take a stand and in a bone-chilling clash, they battle with the undead in a blood-soaked finale.



FULL MOON ENTERTAINMENT Presents "LURKING FEAR" Starring JON FINCH BLAKE BAILEY ASHLEY LAUREN JEFFREY COMBS ALLISON MACKIE PAUL MANTEE JOE LEAVENGOOD and VINCENT SCHIAVELLI as Knagg's Adapted From the Short Story by H.P. LOVECRAFT
Director of Photography ADOLFO BARTOLI, A.I.C. Music by JIM MANZIE Edited by CHARLIE SIMMONS Production Designer RADU CORCIOVA
Costume Designer OANA PAUNESCU Makeup Effects by ALCHEMYFX Casting by MacDONALD/BULLINGTON, C.S.A.



Produced by VLAD PAUNESCU and OANA PAUNESCU



Rated R for violence and language

Executive Producer CHARLES BAND



Written and Directed by C. COURTNEY JOYNER

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CONTENTS

VOLUME 25 NUMBER 5

The magazine with a "Sense of Wonder."

OCTOBER, 1994

It's a little hard to believe that Ed Wood, director of some of the most awful horror and fantasy films ever made is about to become a household word. Almost as amazing is that Touchstone Pictures agreed to finance director Tim Burton's black & white biopic about the maker of PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE. Who beyond a small cadre of the most devoted genre film fans has even heard of Wood? Then again, who'd ever heard of EDWARD SCISSORHANDS?

Filmmaker Mark Carducci provides our cover story exploration of all things Wood-ian, chronicling the behind-the-scenes true story of the real Ed Wood, a talentless hack on whom posterity bestowed fame that was yearned for but never earned in his lifetime. Carducci is the director of the excellent Wood documentary FLYING SAUCERS OVER HOLLYWOOD: THE PLAN 9 COMPANION, which paints a fascinating behind-the-scenes picture of the making of Wood's most famous film, much of which is presented here.

Carducci also chronicles the making of Burton's ED WOOD, which Touchstone opens in October, and notes how Burton has managed to emphasize the positive aspects of Wood's tragic life. Writer Lawrence French provides an interview with Burton about the making of the film and also talks to Martin Landau about essaying the role of Bela Lugosi. Rounding out the coverage are sidebars on Wood's cult phenomenon, including an interview with Vampira, as well as Burton on the making of EDWARD SCISSORHANDS, the film that cemented his reputation as a fantasy filmmaking genius with vision.

As one who laughed his way through screenings of Wood's PLAN 9 and other stupifyingly bad efforts such as BRIDE OF THE MONSTER and the almost surreal GLEN OR GLENDA, I felt Wood's movies weren't worth covering. That opinion hasn't changed, but delving into the details of Wood's life gives the filmmaker a human face and dignity that makes him more than just the butt of his own cinematic jokes. It's material ripe for Burton's special handling.

Frederick S. Clarke



Page 4



Page 12



Page 32



Page 48



Page 52

4 STAR TREK: GENERATIONS

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION heads for the big screen with a little help from original series castmembers William Shatner, Walter Koenig and James Doohan. / *Preview by Michael Beeler*

6 TIMECOP

Director Peter Hyams uses arresting CGI effects to complete a time-travel cops-and-robbers epic starring Jean-Claude Van Damme, Mia Sara and Ron Silver. / *Preview by Robin Brunet*

8 IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS

Director John Carpenter delves into H.P. Lovecraft territory, with a twist, with stars Sam Neill, Julie Carmen and Charlton Heston. / *Preview by Shlomo Schwartzberg*

12 TIM BURTON'S "EDWARD SCISSORHANDS"

Filmmaker Tim Burton on the 1990 fantasy masterpiece that marked him as an auteur with vision—and on making it in Hollywood as a successful director. / *Article by Alan Jones*

21 ED WOOD: CULT LEGEND

The infamous director of PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE is brought to life in a new film biography made by Tim Burton. / *Articles by Mark Carducci & Lawrence French*

32 TIM BURTON'S "ED WOOD"

Burton on his black and white ode to a different kind of auteur—with Johnny Depp starring as the man known as the worst director of all time. / *Interview by Lawrence French*

46 STARGATE

The \$55 million epic science fiction film—with a cast of thousands—has Kurt Russell leading a band of explorers through the universe, in Cecil B. DeMille style. / *Preview by Tim Prokop*

48 ALIEN NATION: DARK HORIZON

Fox revives the popular and acclaimed but cancelled series as a TV movie written by NORTHERN EXPOSURE Emmy winners Andy Schneider and Diane Frolov. / *Preview by Douglas Eby*

52 DELLAMORTE DELLAMORE

Michele Soavi adapts the Tiziano Sclavi book that inspired the Dylan Dog comic strip—the wildly popular Italian fumetti sensation that's more hip than Dario Argento. / *Article by Alan Jones*

56 NIGHT SWARM

Michigan's effects veterans Gary Jones and "Jake" Jacobson mount their own film, about giant blood-sucking mosquitoes from—where else?—northern Michigan. / *Special Effects Profile by Sue Uram*

59 REVIEWS**62 LETTERS**

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STAR TREK GENERATIONS

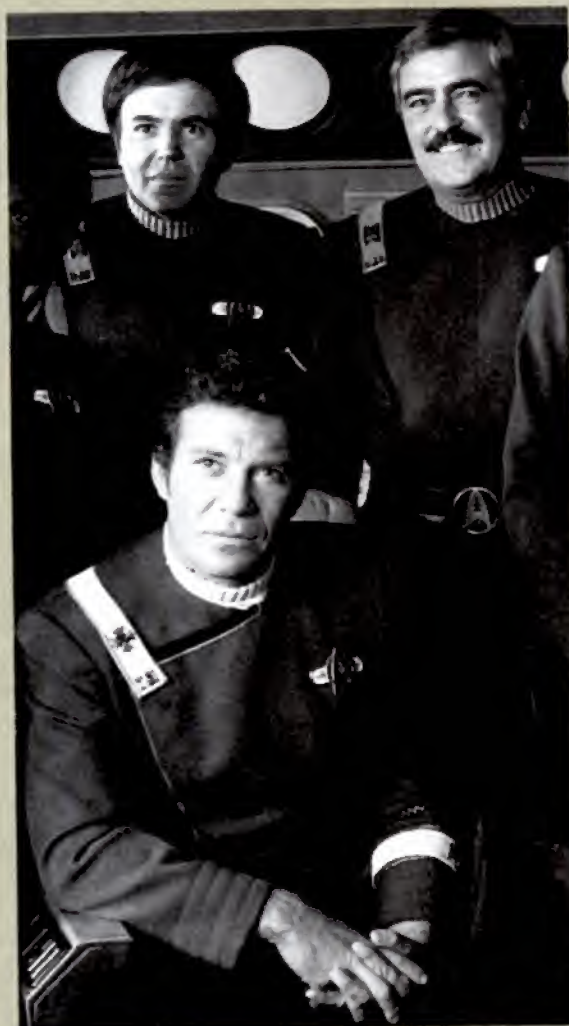
Out with the old, in with the next, spells holiday boxoffice.

By Michael
Beeler

The first day of filming *STAR TREK: GENERATIONS*, the new *STAR TREK* movie from Paramount, which will unite both the original series characters with *THE NEXT GENERATION* cast. Patrick Stewart as Captain Picard and the rest of his crew were arranging themselves on the set, blocking out a scene on the bridge. The actors were simply falling into their usual television series positions, which essentially is fairly close together and somewhat square in format. The director of photography, John Alonzo, who has done over 60 feature films including *BLUE THUNDER* and the critically acclaimed *CHINATOWN*, finally stepped forward and reminded them, "Spread out, this is a wide screen image.

You don't have to stand right on top of one another. We have a big screen to fill so you can open yourselves up to a more natural positioning."

The times they are a-changing. So is the *STAR TREK* universe and its inhabitants. After seven very popular and critically acclaimed seasons, *THE NEXT GENERATION* is finally leaving the old coveredwagon world of television budgets



Back in the saddle, perhaps for the last time, the old generation contingent, William Shatner, with Walter Koenig (l) and James Doohan (r).

and time constraints behind and heading for the seemingly wide open galaxies of feature film-dom. Paramount unveils their new *STAR TREK VII* for the holidays in November.

Brannon Braga, along with Ron Moore, wrote the futuristic adventure in which a unique astronomical phenomenon bridging different time frames brings Picard and Captain James T. Kirk (William Shatner), the two

famous captains of the *Enterprise*, face-to-face in the 24th century. "The greatest challenge was to fill the big screen and make the action bigger," said Braga. "We had to find ways to satisfy the big screen requirements and do things we could never do in the [television] show, in terms of big action sequences. We had to give it an epic feel and we also had to make sure that the film had a broader appeal as well because, it was our feeling that someone who had never seen the show needed to be able to sit down and enjoy this film in its own right."

Rick Berman, producer of both the television series and the film, added that he felt the expanded budget and production schedule were a real asset in creating the first movie of *THE NEXT GENERATION*. "We have five months to do the post-production on this movie. We're used to doing post-production much quicker than that. For John Cameron [sic] five months is a short period of time. For us it is luxurious. And, you have to remember, we've been working with ILM for the last year in getting this all together and the visual effects are well under way, even without the picture being completed. So, I don't think we're going to have any problems get-



Patrick Stewart and the next, spreading out to fill a big screen.

ting it done."

Paramount originally scheduled the release of the movie for March 1995, then changed it to December 1994 before finally deciding on Thanksgiving. According to Berman that still allowed him almost two years to complete the project. "About February '93 I was approached and asked to do the movie," said Berman.

Although the studio didn't ask for it, Berman decided upfront that he would like to somehow integrate some of the characters from the original series into the process. "In the script that Ron and Brannon wrote we developed a story that had all of the [original] characters in it, focusing mostly on the character of Kirk," explained Berman. "But in a—I don't want to say subordinate—a much reduced sense than *THE NEXT GENERATION* actors.

"Primarily our movie opens with prologue that takes place in the 23rd century, that I would guess is somewhere around 15 minutes long. And with one exception, that's where [you see] the bulk of the characters from the original series. How it evolved finally was that we ended up with Bill Shatner and two others, Jimmy Doohan [Scotty] and Walter Koenig [Chekov], and that's it from the



Ready to transport to the movie screen (l to r), Marina Sirtis, Levar Burton, Michael Dorn, Stewart, Jonathan Frakes, Brent Spiner, Gates McFadden.

original series. But it was not something the studio asked us about. It was just something that seemed like a good way to pass the baton."

Both Doohan and Koenig were brought onto the project after Leonard Nimoy and DeForest Kelley declined to be part of the film. Although industry scuttlebutt has it that Kelley declined for health reasons, Berman explained that Nimoy's ultimate departure was based on a lack of substance in the script for Spock, his character.

"The way the story evolved—and this had nothing to do with Leonard, it just had to do with the way we put the story together—the only real integral character to the script from the original series was Kirk. The others all had relatively minor roles. And, in the case of Leonard and De[Forest] Kelley they both felt that they had made appropriate good-byes in STAR TREK VI and there was no reason to bring the characters back for—I wouldn't call them cameos—but they were [only scripted to be] in the first 15 minutes and that was it. In the case of Bill, it was a whole different story. His part has a great deal more depth to it."

On the other side of the coin

Berman admitted to also having a few problems with some of THE NEXT GENERATION's cast, whose more meaty storylines afforded them bargaining power when it came time to sign on the dotted line to do the film.

"We had tremendous problems in negotiating with [THE NEXT GENERATION] actors," said Berman. "All the actors wanted to do the movie, and we knew that from the very beginning, but here was a 130-page script that had the character they were playing all throughout it and it put them in a very good position in terms of negotiating. So the negotiations, which I was never personally involved with, were very traumatic in terms of the pressure that went on from both sides. It was a very tense time, for a while, until all those deals got made. And this was all concurrent with the [final] season itself wrapping up. But, I always predicted that they would all sign to make the movie and, of course, they all did."

Except for Alonzo, the director of photography and actor Malcolm McDowell (A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, BLUE THUNDER), who plays the conspiring Dr. Foran, most of Berman's production crew is made up of the same people

“The challenge was to fill the big screen and make the action bigger,” said scripter Brannon Braga. “We had to find things we could never do on television.”

who have helped make THE NEXT GENERATION such a success. “Being someone with a history primarily in television I have no problem in terms of bringing television people into the movie,” said Berman. “All of our actors are television people, I’m a television person, the writers are television people.”

“My guess will be that David Carson probably is going to have a major film career available to him very soon, based on what he’s doing with this picture. After working with him, on numerous things, on both DEEP SPACE NINE and THE NEXT GENERATION, I was well aware of his abilities. And he has shown them tenfold in the last eight weeks that we’ve been working on this end of it and 20 weeks prior to that while we were in prep.”

Ultimately it was Berman's hiring of Carson that resulted in Alonzo, a well-respected Oscar-nominated cinematographer, agreeing to join a predominantly television-based crew, which had very little experience in feature film production. Noted Alonzo, who admitted to never really following the STAR TREK series or movies, “The

real magnet is I found David Carson, the director, to have a vision of this [film] that was not what I expected. In other words, it was not a little TV box vision. It was something with grand scope. And, he fought very hard to get it so he could shoot with anamorphic lenses. Originally they wanted us to shoot in 1:85 or super 35 because of the budget. They originally had a very nice budget and schedule for this picture that made a lot of sense but in Hollywood nowadays, the name of the game is do it for less and do it in a shorter period of time. David fought very hard and so did I, to shoot this in scope because what's the difference? If we have to shoot it in 1:85, you might as well shoot it on the super television.”

Alonzo added that another reason he came aboard was Carson's emphasis on the moral statement of the picture. “We're candy-coating it, if you will, but there is a message in the picture that you'll see when it comes out,” said the cinematographer. “It has, I think, a superior performance level [compared] to the previous pictures. Not that the previous cast was worse. But this picture has a higher standard. □

TV director David Carson has a movie field day, blocking out Gwynyth Walsh as B'Etor and Barbara March as Lursa, the film's Klingon femme fatales.



TIMECOP

Computer graphics imaging allowed director Peter Hyams creative latitude.

By Robin Brunet

Universal postponed the summer opening of *TIMECOP*, its time-travel saga starring martial artist Jean Claude Van Damme, from August until September 16, to allow more time to complete its complex CGI effects in post-production. Van Damme plays Max Walker, a Time Enforcement Commission (TEC) agent from the year 2004, who comes back to 1994 in pursuit of a time criminal played by Ron Silver.

TIMECOP's showcase set is its cavernous TEC launch bay. Like the film's other interiors the huge set was constructed in Vancouver's Bridge Studios. The TEC launch bay filled the Studio's largest soundstage—475 feet long, 50 feet wide and 85 feet high—the same stage in which production designer Philip Harrison squeezed a full-size house, several blocks of an ancient French village and the interior of a castle for *STAY TUNED*, like *TIMECOP* also directed by Peter Hyams.

The few visitors allowed on the TEC launch bay set felt as if they were at ant-level in a metal and concrete canyon. Cutting through the enormous expanse was a 300-foot track bearing the time pod; on either side of the runway were rows of massive electronic banks and foreboding gantries. Towering over everything was a 50-foot high octagonal "time hole" at the track's terminus.

The launch bay augmented the TEC squad room, described



The film's love story center: Jean Claude Van Damme as the timecop who re-encounters dead wife Mia Sara, on an assignment in his past (our present).

by Hyams as "an old building with concrete walls, with conduit around steel columns that look like the ones put into the New York subway system in the '40s and '50s. The overlays are the heavy blast doors, the state-of-the-art computers and monitors. I'm imagining that TEC probably didn't get as much money as they wanted for their program."

Futurist Syd Mead designed the arrow-shaped TEC-LV4 time pod and handed its construction to Thomas Special Effects. That North Vancouver-based company built the vehicle out of sheet metal to withstand being propelled repeatedly along the track by a double pulley attached to a truck parked outside the soundstage.

Equipment from an old fighter aircraft was installed in the pod's cockpit to enhance the notion TEC is a bare-bones or-

ganization. Dry ice compartments in the pod were ignited by water when the filmmakers needed to show the vehicle preparing for launch. Jet fuel ignited by a blowtorch produced three-foot-diameter flames from the back of the pod during blast-off (the time travel sequences were shot last December and the crew quickly discovered the flames were the only source of heat in the mammoth soundstage).

Once established, *TIMECOP*'s 62-day production kicked off last September without much fanfare. The only trouble occurred early on when location scouts had to find a stretch of downtown Vancouver that could double as Wall Street in 1929 for a time travel sequence involving the great stock market crash. One building out of endless blocks of chrome and mirrored glass fit

the bill: the art deco Marine Building adjoining the harbor. The edifice was used for a scene where two stockbrokers plummet to their death.

"That was probably our most elaborate outdoor setup," recalled unit publicist Darryl Wright. "We shot for three consecutive Sundays with seven cameras and filled the streets with period cars and a slew of costumed extras." Effects expert John Thomas engineered the stockbrokers' fall by hooking stuntmen to a wire descender rig bolted to the roof—an especially tricky task considering the Marine Building's rooftop is angled, not flat. A remote-controlled camera was suspended from the descender's criss-cross of metal tubing and Hyams filmed portions of the scene incorporating a motion control pan which, when matched to digital effects supervised by Greg McMurry, would enhance the audience's feeling they are seeing 1920s New York.

Hyams downplayed the technical difficulty of pulling off an especially elaborate motion control maneuver whereby Ron Silver confronts his younger self and moves around him. "It took a full day to shoot and weeks of preparation, but the real difficulty was in creating something people haven't seen before," said Hyams. After losing countless nights' sleep, Hyams hit upon the idea of beginning the shot in a way audiences would be fooled into assuming they were looking over

EFFECTS COMPUTER EASE

“It’s great to tell a kinetic director like Peter Hyams to go off and do what he wants,” said CGI supervisor Greg McMurry. “We give his movie a sense of wonder and fun.”

“We flew to New York to obtain background plates, but the buildings had modern-day air conditioners, so we built 12-foot tall duplicates instead and rearranged the position of some of the buildings as a subtle joke,” said McMurry. The miniatures were filmed at the 30,000-square-foot CGI headquarters.

About 10 shots in *TIMECOP* display the time travel effect from different perspectives. Screenwriter Mark Verheiden had described the time barrier as a viscous curtain of

clear matter through which each traveller emerges and takes form. “Peter [Hyams] had definite ideas about how the liquid would form and run off each person and how much the barrier would stretch,” McMurry explained. “We used a Silicon Graphics software package called the ‘Flame’ compositing system to achieve these shots and built 3-D models of the actors for close-ups of liquid pouring off their faces. Blue screens were used to pull the actors in and out of the scene.”

CGI used a high resolution film scanner called the TC4 that delivers over 2000 lines of resolution to scan raw Vancouver footage straight into the CGI computer system (as opposed to on disc). Once the effects were added, the finished product was previewed on video, and from there a Solitaire printer transferred it back to film.

Another challenge for McMurry is the film’s climactic horror sequence in which Van Damme throws Ron Silver into his younger self and produces a grotesque, melting monstrosity. “Achieving this kind of sequence is relatively easy because of digital technology,” observed McMurry. “What is tough is making it look believable, so we’re storyboarding and testing, and wondering if we can’t stretch our budget a little bit.”

Budget-stretching aside, McMurry ranked *TIMECOP* high on his impressive resume. “It’s great to be able to tell someone like Peter [Hyams], who is such a kinetic director, to go off and do what he wants—it frees him up and gives us a challenge at the same time. Hopefully we give his movie a sense of wonder and fun.” □

Filming the money set at Vancouver’s Bridge studios, the TEC launch bay designed by futurist Syd Mead. Universal now opens the film September 16.



Van Damme, the 32-year-old martial artist who plays Time Enforcement Commission (TEC) agent Max Walker. Inset: Gloria Reuben plays Agent Fielding, his time travel sidekick.

a double’s shoulder.

TIMECOP doesn’t rely extensively on digital effects, save for a few showcase scenes and its time travel sequences. Mostly, Greg McMurry’s 20-member CGI crew were called upon to “finish” the camera moves Hyams had used on location. The drawback with computer technology, observed McMurry, who fondly recalled the heady model-and-smoky-room days of *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS* and *BLADE RUNNER*, is that one must know exactly how much effects footage is required.

“Computers deal in frame-by-frame exactitude,” said McMurry. “Each frame costs a lot of money, so we can’t waste footage on something that won’t make it into the final print,” he said, adding dryly that his company, CGI, was given about \$1.5 million to make *TIMECOP* sparkle—hardly a *JURASSIC PARK* budget.

If audiences don’t notice the end product, then McMurry is happy. “I like the challenge of creating invisible effects with computers,” he said. “That’s what made *FREE WILLY* so enjoyable. People still don’t realize most of the damned whale was a digital creation.”

Hyams, no slouch when it comes to glitzy visuals, appreciated McMurry’s convictions, and designing the effects shots became a task of filmmaking rather than technology. “The way we worked out the Wall Street of 1929 scenes or the times the characters meet their younger selves was to let Peter film the shot as if there were no effects at all,” said McMurry. Whatever he came up with, we could add to on computer. That gives *TIMECOP* a weird kind of verisimilitude.”

In other words, Hyams was free to pan and track with his camera, and for McMurry that meant pushing digital technology a little further than, say, the effects of *IN THE LINE OF FIRE*, where static footage of presidential rallies is combined with foreground shots of Clint Eastwood.

Hyams’ motion-control movements following the stockbrokers as they plunge off a Wall Street office building were the most challenging to “finish.” McMurry’s crew digitally removed the modern-day Vancouver harbor from each frame of film and replaced it with properly aligned miniature buildings shot with the same motion-control move.

IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS

Helmer John Carpenter delves into H.P. Lovecraft territory.

By Shlomo Schwartzberg

There is something strange about the Pickman Hotel in the town of Hobb's End. It might be the creepy old lady at the front desk, whose eyes are very red, from "reading," she says. Or the picture on one of the walls, which seems to be changing every time you look at it. Or maybe, it's the old lady's husband behind the counter, who's hanging on to her legs and is slowly metamorphosing into a tentacled monster.

Welcome to the site of John Carpenter's latest movie, a Lovecraftian tale, loosely based on the Cthulhu Mythos, that he's calling *IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS*. There's also a nod towards horrormeister Stephen King in the person of the film's fictional New England author, Sutter Cane, played by Jurgen Prochnow (*DAS BOOT*). New Line Cinema gives the film a national opening September 2.

The story's premise is that Cane, the world's best-selling horror writer, has disappeared, on the eve of the publication of his latest book. Sent to find him



Searching for missing horror novelist Sutter Cane (l to r), publisher Charlton Heston, agent Julie Carmen, insurance man Sam Neill.

by the book's publisher (a cameo by Charlton Heston) are his agent (*FRIGHT NIGHT PART II*'s Julie Carmen) and a cynical insurance investigator who hates anything to do with horror (*JURASSIC PARK*'s Sam Neill). But the duo soon finds out that Hobb's End (a reference to the science fiction film *FIVE MILLION MILES TO EARTH*), where Cane was last seen, is actually a creation of the author's and they've been

chosen to "star" in the book; what happens to them is the basis of Cane's story.

IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS is just the type of playful and inventive film that Carpenter, coming off the less-than-successful *MEMOIRS OF AN INVISIBLE MAN*, thrives on. (He calls it a film about "the unspeakable, unutterable horror flying around in the dark.") And it fulfills one of his long-held dreams. "I always wanted to do Lovecraft," he said. "I've never really done a Lovecraft type film, but I suppose if you really were honest about *THE THING* and probably *WHO GOES THERE?* they really had a little bit of Lovecraft in it."

Watching Carpenter on the set of *IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS* (the hotel scenes were filmed about an hour outside of Toronto, the actual monster sequences in a marine terminal not far from downtown), it's evident that he's very relaxed on the job, an attitude that has spread to the cast and crew. Customarily, he tends not to shoot too many takes. "Clint East-



Carpenter's Lovecraftian horror.

wood said, 'Just commit. Don't shoot five ways, you commit to one or two ways of doing the scene.'"

The lanky and easy-going—albeit chain smoking—Carpenter (he alternates the cigarettes with lots of gum) is, as one would expect, very knowledgeable about the horror field. But he's just as informed about H.P. Lovecraft, who was one of his early influences. "Lovecraft was writing in a specific time for a specific purpose and he wore his style on his sleeve like



Creature designed and built by the KNB Efx Group of Chatsworth, California.

Hitchcock wore his style on his sleeve. What people can't appreciate is that Lovecraft was a master technician. He would write stories, such as 'The Outsider,' that would lead up to the last sentence."

IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS is, in many ways, using classic devices that Lovecraft was best known for, said Carpenter. "It's really a story where you go back to an old idea. You have a man in an insane asylum [Neill] who appears to be completely crazy and tells you a

completely crazy tale. [The psychiatrists he tells it to are played by John Glover and David Warner.] You come back to it again and ask yourself is he really crazy or not?"

"Stylistically, that part [of the film] is accessible, I can understand it. It's the tonal quality, making sure that it's correct in each scene that offers a whole set of challenges. It's a hard type of film to do, if you don't try to overachieve. One of the best examples of that kind of structure, even if it was

tacked on later, is [the '50s] INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS. That really works."

Carpenter was reluctant to be too specific about what he'll finally put on screen, only saying that the movie will contain "a lot of interesting horror scenes, which you really haven't seen before. We try to push the limit in a different way, so it's not just a bunch of scares. It's very inventively written by Michael DeLuca and has a lot of slightly different ideas as its basis. The horror scenes have a totally different twist to them and go off in completely nutball directions. One of them is the Wall of Monsters, creatures lurking from beyond, who manage to come through a rip in reality into our world and chase after Sam Neill. It'll be fun."

Humor, in fact, will play a big part in the story. One of the film's running gags is that Neill is the only one who never notices anything weird going on around him; he's continually just missing the apparitions and off-kilter things lurking around the corner. "This film has a very strong comedy side to it. It's not necessarily played for comedy but it has a lot of humorous things in it."

Conversely there won't be much gore or violence in IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS ("It's as violent as the story requires," said Carpenter), but that's not because he's giving in to the current backlash of censorship surrounding the issue of violence in entertainment.

"When I made HALLOWEEN, there was no on-screen



A victim of the horror at fictional Hobb's End, makeup by KNB. Cane's latest book come to life.

violence at all in the film because we can all understand what happens with a man and a knife," said Carpenter. "You don't have to show it, there's no reason to show it. Other stories require a little bit more of it. I recently did a TV thing called BODY BAGS that had a quite a bit of violence in it, but it didn't create anywhere near the stir of NYPD BLUE."

Neill's character, John Trent, functions, noted Carpenter, as the personification of the filmmakers' own beliefs. "He's very cynical, the side of us that doesn't believe in the stuff. It's good if you have somebody who echoes the audience's natural

Carpenter directs Neill during filming in Toronto. Lovecraftian horror has always been a Carpenter influence, evident in his take on THE THING (1982).





KNB makeup artist Gino Cagnole puts finishing touches on the Sutter Cane monster, sprouting from a likeness of actor Jurgen Prochnow. The film is based on a script by New Line development exec Michael DeLuca, long in development.

and understandable disbelief in all the goings on. What we're really doing in horror is trying to make you believe in things you know aren't true and can't happen, especially when it veers off into the fantasy level." Those ideas are something young children, including his own nine-year-old son, are particularly responsive to, he said. "That's why young people who haven't been jaded or experi-

A Hobb's End boy of 12 ages to 100, makeup design by Evan Campbell, a figment of the author's imagination.



enced the variety of life tend to have the most [amount] of a fantasy life."

The \$10 million, independently made *IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS*, and the autonomy he's been given on set, are quite a departure from his last feature, the \$40 million studio pic *MEMOIRS OF AN INVISIBLE MAN*, which was plagued with problems during its shoot. "The biggest problem was that what the studio wanted and what the producer [and star] Chevy Chase wanted were two different things. He didn't want to do comedy, he wanted to be serious. The studio wanted him to do *NATIONAL LAMPOON'S VACATION*."

Still, Carpenter chalks the film up as a good experience. "I wanted to work with Chevy. I always wanted to. I thought he had a lot of talent. I enjoyed that movie, thought it worked out fine. The audience didn't want to go see it, they just did not want to show up."

Obviously Carpenter's hoping that the boxoffice of *IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS* will be more profitable. But just as important is his hope that his unique film will usher in a new and fresh wave in the cinematic horror genre, something that hasn't been much in evidence lately.

"I think horror has run out of

ideas. There are no new ideas, it's the same thing over and over again. A lot of people are bailing out. Stephen [King] has started to change a little bit, he's trying to make the realistic stuff. And David [Cronenberg] says he's not going to do horror anymore—it's very odd.

"I know that when *DRACULA* came out we were all hoping that horror would be revitalized by that. I think it needs a new infusion of ideas. We've all gotten used to the formula, which has been basically the same for some 20-25 years.

"In terms of movies, what usually happens is that a breakthrough film comes along and a lot of filmmakers copy it or in-

Neill, a cynical insurance investigator looking into the disappearance of Cane on the eve of his bestseller, finds himself a character in the page-turner.



corporate its cinematic ideas into their movie. Examples are the original *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* and *THE EXORCIST*. We just haven't had a film like those come along and incorporate new cinematic ideas about horror. It's gotten very stale."

Pessimistic talk notwithstanding, Carpenter is adamant that things can change for the better, even in the moribund world of horror. "People have been talking about the western dying for years and years. All of a sudden everybody's making westerns. Horror just needs that film that has a good story to it, that is well acted with everything that really works."

Meanwhile Carpenter, whose next project will be a modern day remake of *VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED*, has got a film to wrap up, one that he says is among the most pleasant jobs of his career. (And yes, he is scoring the movie but only after he's assembled the final cut) "I'm having a good time because I really love the actors (and) I love the story."

Does he, at age 45, have any regrets about the direction his career's gone in? None, he says. "I love horror, I love science fiction. I had different kinds of dreams when I was younger, when I was trying to break into Hollywood. I wanted to direct Westerns and action pictures. Then *HALLOWEEN* came along and gave me basically a career and I struggled with it for awhile but I've come to understand what a gift it was and how wonderful it was. I'm extremely happy being John Carpenter, I enjoy it." □

KNB EFX MADNESS

*Defining Lovecraft's
horror imagery in latex.*

Shlomo Schwartzberg

"In order for this stuff to work, you can only see it briefly and only under the correct circumstances [through] lighting and fog."

For Greg Nicotero of KNB EFX Group, who are doing the special makeup effects for *IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS*, the philosophy of less-

is-more fits right in with what John Carpenter wants. Well known for their realistic effects in such movies as *DANCES WITH WOLVES* (the buffalo stampede), *ARMY OF DARKNESS* (the skeletal warriors), *RESERVOIR DOGS* (the famous ear scene) and *THE PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS*,

among others, KNB faces its biggest challenge with *IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS*.

With only seven weeks to prepare, KNB was encouraged to go all out to create an otherworldly menagerie for the film. "We had an opportunity to design stuff that had never been seen before. We sat down and threw out ideas and John said to just run with it."

The highlight of the film is the Wall of Monsters, an 18-foot construction meant to resemble a bulldozer pushing the creatures through one dimension into ours. "John wanted to

see the wall of creatures coming towards us," said Nicotero.

The final product is an amalgam of foam latex, urethane and foam lubricated creatures, some with tentacles, extra eyes, skeletal tongues, multiple arms, anything, as long as it wasn't recognizable. "I was specific about wanting to see stuff that didn't look human," said Nicotero. And Carpenter backed them up no matter how over-the-top the creatures got. "However much you guys can give me, I want," said Nicotero quoting the director. If it's convincing on film, the Wall, which is actually 12 monsters pushing four in front of them, will "look like there are a 100, that looking back it just goes off into infinity," he said.

The Wall, which takes 25 people to operate, can't be on screen for too long, lest its shock value decreases. "It'll be shown enough to be disturbing but not enough to hit the audience over the head."

Though they're also responsible for some puppet work on the film, KNB's main work is on the monsters. Pulling the special makeup effects off (Industrial Light and Magic is handling the visual effects) will be a feather in the cap of this fast rising and young (only six years old) company, said Nicotero. "It doesn't matter how it looks to us, it's how it looks on film. *IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS* is not only an opportunity to showcase our talent, but to show we can handle a project of this size." □



Francis Bay
as Mrs.
Pickman.

Top: KNB technicians rig the tentacles sprouting from Francis Bay as Mrs. Pickman. Middle: Greg Nicotero works on another Hobb's End monstrosity. Bottom: Sulting up the climactic Lovecraftian crab monster that chases Neil.

Tim Burton's Edward Scissorhands

Burton on the 1990 fantasy masterpiece that marked him as an auteur with vision.

By Alan Jones

It began as a sketch Tim Burton drew in college long before he set sights on becoming a film director. Later, while on *THE BLACK CAULDRON* and *THE FOX AND THE HOUND* Disney design team, he added a series of disconnected images which intrigued him on a fun level: huge scissors, sculpted bushes, coiffured dogs and lots of snow. Secretly he developed a narrative with Caroline Thompson, (co-writer of *THE ADDAMS FAMILY MOVIE*), personally paying her in irregular stages, who slowly fused his wayward ideas together. Then Burton had to wait for the right time to present his painstaking labors as a total package he wouldn't change under any circumstances. That time came soon after he built a sure-fire boxoffice reputation with *PEE WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE*, *BEETLEJUICE* and *BATMAN*. The result was 1990's *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS*, a moderate hit in commercial terms, but the movie closest to Burton's heart.

"I wanted to make a movie that expressed my affection for fairy tales and the feelings I get



Burton on the set of reclusive *Scissorhands*' topiary garden, gone to seed.

out of them," revealed Burton. "I love fairy tales, but they've lost their meaning thanks to a guilty Disney sanitizing them. I don't quite know how it happened, but the term is now not only used to describe something good, something just for children or *PRETTY WOMAN!* That's not what the best ones are about at all. If you shot a Brothers Grimm fable today, you'd have trouble getting an R-rating. Fairy tales are symbolic, they're necessary violence abstract. The form allows you to stick in quotes and explore many avenues within a simple framework."

Co-produced by Denise Di Novi, producer of *HEATHERS* and *MEET THE APPLEGATES*, and later one-time president of Burton's own production company, *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS* was a tailor-made project for both parties according to the director. "I was looking for someone who I could work with and Denise was introduced by a mutual friend as someone I should, and would, like to know," he said. "There aren't many people I meet who I do actually like, but we connected instantly. Obviously her past projects



Johnny Depp as Edward Scissorhands. Above: Winona Ryder as Kim as an old woman, narrating the tale. Right: Edward's Ice Palace, seen at the start, and the final shot of Edward sculpting, explaining the source of the snowstorm.



MAKING IT IN HOLLYWOOD

“You’d think it would get easier to cope with all the many Hollywood things that constantly get in the way,” said Burton. “It doesn’t. It just gets harder to deal with.”



Vincent Price as the kindly inventor who creates Edward Scissorhands.

[VIDEODROME, OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN, VISITING HOURS], means she has an empathy for certain kinds of movies. There aren’t many L.A.-based producers in a position to like or deal with unusual material. She does, and can, and that’s very rare.”

Continued Burton, “You’d think it would get easier to cope with all the many Hollywood things that constantly get in the way. It doesn’t. It gets harder as there’s so much to deal and contend with in that environment. I’m creative, but not very organized, whereas Denise is both. She fills in the gaps and takes

care of all the extraneous things I can’t be bothered with.”

Despite Burton making a fortune for Warner Bros with his string of hits for the company, they passed on financing EDWARD SCISSORHANDS for \$18 million—a safety net figure kept deliberately low by Burton to ensure it would get made. “I was glad Warners passed,” said Burton. “I didn’t want the studio making EDWARD SCISSORHANDS specifically based on my previous successes. I didn’t want them backing it solely for its own sake. They still would have had to distribute it had they taken a

hands-off policy and that was worrisome. If they didn’t understand it while I was pitching it, what hope would the marketing people have had?”

But one person did understand what Burton wanted to achieve—Joe Roth, former Morgan Creek head, now 20th Century-Fox chief. “He’s the one I have to thank,” said Burton. “He started his career as a filmmaker and was a successful producer, not director, as he would be the first to admit, before he landed the Fox job. Therefore he knew all the ins and outs of the full production spectrum. He was sensitive to what EDWARD SCISSORHANDS was about and, more importantly, could imagine it. Dealing with most studio executives is like pitching a radio program. They never think in visual terms. Joe understood it completely and gave us the go-ahead two weeks after we met.”

EDWARD SCISSORHANDS is almost a direct lift of Heinrich Hoffman’s 1845 cautionary children’s tale “Struwelpeter.” Translated from German into “Shock-Headed Peter,” it told the hair-raising story of a disheveled wild boy letting his fingernails grow into dangerously long talons. Replace Pe-

ter’s unkemptness with a leather-clad Punkenstein look, his nails with gardening shears, and that’s Johnny Depp’s character in Burton’s fusion of fairy tale themes with contemporary slants.

“Someone showed me that story after the fact,” confessed Burton. “I’d honestly never seen it before so I can truthfully say it wasn’t the basis for EDWARD SCISSORHANDS. When I first drew his image, I didn’t have any real application in mind, although, at one point, I considered turning it into an opera because I felt the imagery was so strongly related to singing. Obviously, once I’d started my film career, I tailored it for that medium.”

Burton chose writer Caroline Thompson to help develop his story because he’d admired her novel *First Born*, erroneously linked to William Friedkin as his next movie. “It was close to the feeling I wanted for EDWARD SCISSORHANDS,” noted Burton. “It was a great working relationship. I was lucky to meet her. I’m not the most verbal of people, especially when it’s an idea

In a Florida-filmed suburbia, Edward becomes a hit with his topiary magic.





Burton and Price on the set. Inset: The Inventor conceives of Edward, an automaton with a heart.

coming from my subconscious. But she got attuned quickly and we connected almost psychically."

That's why there are so many autobiographical elements in EDWARD SCISSORHANDS. Always considered wacky, weird and introverted, Burton never fit in at high school or Hollywood society. He's still the misunder-

stood outsider, very much like Depp's humanoid character to whom he bears more than a passing physical resemblance. While his mournful creation trims hedges into exotic animal topiaries and hair into outrageous style, Burton cuts film into unique but highly commercial works of surreal pop art. "Let's just say EDWARD SCISSORHANDS contains

themes I relate to more than any other movie I've made," he confided. "It delves into personal memories and all manner of culture, emotional and social areas that interest me. Layering EDWARD SCISSORHANDS with this subtext seemed right for the format and one that could well afford it."

Take for example the "Have a Nice Day" mentality

Edward Scissorhands faces when Dianne Wiest moves him from his gloomy Gothic mansion into pastel-painted suburbia. It's based on a social lesson Burton learned while shooting BATMAN at London's Pinewood Studios. "I grew up in Burbank—the reason I started work at Disney—and I always felt oddly disturbed by American attitudes,"

Providing mute testimony of his artistry for newswoman Victoria Price.

Beauty parlor operator Conchata Ferrell shows Edward her back room.



“Edward’s painful story encompasses what I feel about life, and how I cope on a daily basis,” said Burton. “It’s a mix of the good, the dark, the light, the funny and the sad.”



Depp as Scissorhands proved a casting stroke of genius on Burton's part.

recalled Burton. “Living in England during the BATMAN period solidified many of those strange feelings. Everybody is your friend immediately in America and I could never work out why I was so resistant to this instant acceptance. It takes longer to get to know someone in Britain, but when you do, you realize the closeness will be a lasting bond: it feels more natural. That’s the reason why Edward Scissorhands was superficially welcomed into Wiest’s day-glo Florida community with no questions ever asked.”

Vincent Price, starring as

Edward Scissorhands’ mad inventor, continues the self-references. “His cameo has real emotional context,” said Burton. “He voiced and supported VINCENT, the first puppet short I made, and I got through childhood watching his horror movies. He gave it the strongest personal feelings.”

Because Edward Scissorhands can’t hold Winona Ryder, the girl he adores most, through fear of causing her harm, Burton weaves an underlying threat of love being a fatally attractive lethal weapon. Noted Burton, “Ed-

ward’s painful story encompasses what I feel about life. It’s a mix of the good, the bad, the dark, the light, the funny and the sad. Love is a big mass of emotional conflicts, they’re never straightforward. Those contradictions are very much a part of what makes me...well me and how I cope on a daily basis.”

Nor has Burton’s marriage to Lena Geiseke changed his opinion about love being the impossible dream. “Love will always be a complete abstraction in my mind,” he said, “but my marriage is the real reason I could make EDWARD SCISSORHANDS in the first place.” Burton is now separated from his wife and dating Lisa Marie, the actress who plays Vampira in ED WOOD.

Burton had no idea how tearful audiences would become watching his magical, mystery *tour de force*. Although somewhat bemused by critics dubbing EDWARD SCISSORHANDS his E.T., the first indication he had regarding the heartfelt impact it carried came when he saw a rough cut. “And I burst out crying, myself,” he

smiled. “From that moment on, I didn’t care what anyone else thought and I’ve never felt that way about anything else I’ve directed. Johnny Depp being as pure as he could be, and Danny Elfman’s score, are the main factors why it has such an emotional release.”

Burton had nothing but praise for Depp’s performance, although Fox had a different casting suggestion originally. “Tom Cruise was their first choice, but I knew he’d never consider it,” said Burton. “I had a few meetings based on that pretense because I didn’t want to immediately create a ‘Me vs. Them’ situation. So I went along with it knowing it would work out the way I wanted anyway.”

Noted Burton, “Johnny risked all by not making the character flamboyant or over the top. There he was on set, covered from head to toe in leather, with few lines to speak. ‘Hmm, he’s pretty restrained, blank almost,’ I’d say to myself watching him perform. But when I saw the rushes, what he made come through, I just couldn’t believe. He’d glaze his eyes over and put across the subtle torment almost like a Walter Keane painting. The

Tricked into going on a neighborhood heist, Edward is left holding the bag.





Burton directs a disembodied Depp, as the Inventor takes a break to read Edward a story (inset).

simple, internal style of acting he achieved was amazing.”

Added Burton, “Johnny was continually sweaty and uncomfortable on the humid Florida locations, but he studied Charlie Chaplin silent films to get his movements right and handed Stan Winston’s Scissorhand prosthetics so deftly we never needed the eight off-screen cable operators I was always

dreading.”

Burton admitted he was desperate to avoid the technical approach with EDWARD SCISSORHANDS. “While that option has to be taken for most movies these days, and I thought about this avenue, I realized it was more important for Johnny to do it alone and really feel it,” said Burton. “He was in every shot and moving cables

would have slowed everything down. On a purely practical level, it would have been a nightmare. Luckily, Johnny was sensitive to the problem and could artistically rationalize it although it was hard for him to strike the poses and achieve an edgy mix of being beautiful and elegant one moment, and then, by turn, dangerous and twisted looking.

Added Burton, “Stan and I designed the prosthetics with a purposeful Japanese focus. I insisted they be large and a combination of complexity and simplicity if that makes sense. Stan had a knack of looking at my cartoony sketches and applying them to reality while still retaining their basic feeling. Not giving Edward Scissorhands eyebrows opened him

Dejected at being hunted as a monster for a misinterpreted act of bravery.

Holding Kim (Winona Ryder) before returning to a life of lonely isolation.



up, and his unkempt hair was supposed to indicate he'd cut it himself at various times. That detailing gave him his own little history.

The fact that Depp and Ryder were a hot tabloid item did not concern Burton too much. "I'm not a counselor and had no intention of guessing how long their relationship would last," he said. "So I decided not to think about it. There was always the danger they'd bring personal tension on set, or they'd split up mid shoot, but it never happened and their relationship helped the core romance more than hindered it, in retrospect."

Depp adding his own personality to EDWARD SCISSORHANDS helped explode the Burton autobiographical aspects to a great degree also. "Johnny's own life mirrored the movie's theme," noted Burton. "He's supposed to be this sexy 21 JUMP STREET teen idol, yet he's so far removed from that. Actually, Winona is nothing like the cheerleader type she plays either. She felt she was putting on a suit of nails every time she got into character! There's a sadness about being perceived as something quite different from what you are inside. It gave Johnny a sense of isolation he used so well in his performance and I could look at the movie more objectively as a result."

Burton named Diane Wiest EDWARD SCISSORHANDS's guardian angel, though. "People who read the script could be divided into two camps," said Burton. "It either left them cold or got received very enthusiasti-



Diane Wiest as Peg, Kim's mom, makes an out-of-the-way Avon sales call to discover Edward. Above: The Inventor dies just as he is about to give Edward his hands.

At Christmas, Edward sculpts an angel out of ice to win Kim's affection.

Wandering the grounds of his prison/sanctuary at the film's conclusion.



DEPP AS SCISSORHANDS

“Johnny’s own life mirrored the movie’s theme,” said Burton. “There’s a sadness about being perceived as something quite different from what you are inside.”

cally. Diane was the first actress to read it who supported it completely. She was my first signing and, because she’s so well respected in the industry, once she endorsed it, others got interested. I love any actor who just goes for it all stops out and that’s exactly what Diane did.”

Florida was chosen as Wiest’s suburban STEPFORD WIVES community because “Close-knit neighborhoods have developed too much in California, although shots became quite difficult to match because of the drastic weather changes.” Despite [production designer] Bo Welch painting all the houses different colors, it was important to me that the area was still an actual community. We hardly touched the house interiors. What you see in the movie is very much how they were, so I could mirror reality. I didn’t want it too artificial or theatrical even though it’s patently ridiculous. That reality base helped me get a handle on the story, too.”


Burton chuckled, “I loved the huge be the girl is tucked up into for the prologue and epilogue. I can’t tell you how useful that prop became during shooting because we’d all lie on top of it to recover!”

Three questions/minor criticisms Burton has had levelled at EDWARD SCISSORHANDS incur his wrath, though. They are: “Isn’t the movie’s time-frame all over the place?” “Where does Edward get those huge blocks of ice for the climax?” and “Why did you ruin the story with needless violence?” Answered Burton, “If anyone asks me those I just warn them never to see any other movie I make. If people can only think about those incidentals at pivotal junctures, let them go and see PRETTY


WOMAN again instead! The violence question shocked me. Many lost the meaning there, why a sweet, nice movie erupts with viciousness. But the nasty elements are very light and certainly not gratuitous or hardcore at all. Edward Scissorhands needed that catharsis because he’s been tortured and abused throughout the whole movie. His was a necessary and emotional response.

“I don’t consider myself a too proficient filmmaker, which saves me a little bit in certain ways,” Burton said modestly. “I don’t have great command of technique or film language to successfully experiment with a concept I think is wrong in the first place. The aspects separate from film intrigue me about the film medium. Does that make sense? I approach filmmaking more from the point of view of images, ideas and just making concepts work. That’s my safety mechanism. If someone said, ‘Here, direct a western,’ I’m convinced I’d make one no one would ever want to see. Put simply, I suppose I have to do what I want to do with no compromises.”

Happily Burton is now in that position and can call all the shots as his past track record and HAIRSPRAY meets THE ELEPHANT MAN success shows. But, on the eve of tackling BATMAN RETURNS in 1991 he commented, “No one will dare try anything new in Hollywood. Their lynch-mob mentality really disturbs me and they’re too quick to judge a trend. Last year bit action movies were the rage. Next year it’s supposed to be small comedies. There’s no sense of the exciting and unpredictable. Then EDWARD SCISSORHANDS comes along and, because it won’t fit into any category, it’s seen as something more daring and original than it is.” □



Edward stands alone, in the peace of a world of his own artistic creation.



PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE



with
BELA LUGOSI
VAMPIRA
LYLE TALBOT

A J. Edward Reynolds Production

Produced and Directed by
Edward D. Wood, Jr.

ED WOOD

CULT LEGEND

How one of the best filmmakers of all time found kinship in the tragedy of the worst.

By Mark Carducci

Actor/writer/director Ed Wood was born in Poughkeepsie, New York on October 10, 1924. His tragi-comic hallucinatory, yet wistful life can be divided into roughly three phases: the initial period during which he established himself and made his connections (such as they were) in the film industry (1948 to 1953), his most productive filmmaking period (1953-1960), and his prose fiction period, which was compelled by the simple but, no doubt for Wood, crushing reality that he had become virtually unemployable as a director (1960-1978). Not that Wood ever really was employable in the first place; his films were virtually all self-generated, with the financing coming mostly from investors he was forced to find himself. Most of Wood's life was a slow disintegration, a desperate almost two decades of struggle for money and creative outlet.

Of his early and on-going habit of regularly wearing female clothing, it must be said that it probably was a greater source of conflict within him than has ever been acknowledged. Always hopeful, he continued to write screenplays for other directors, especially A.C. Stevens, the director/producer of Wood's *ORGY OF THE*



Johnny Depp (r) as Wood, exiting the Brown Derby with Jeffrey Jones as Criswell, Patricia Arquette as Wood's wife Kathy, and Martin Landau as Bela Lugosi. Touchstone Pictures opens Burton's *ED WOOD* in October. Left: The poster of Wood's magnum opus with Burton's cast, featuring Bill Murray.

DEAD (1966); but Wood's downward spiral into poverty and alcoholism was more clearly reflected in the pornographic films he made at this time. A bloated and disheveled Wood even performed in drag in a few of these (though not engaging in sex) and they are deeply disturbing to watch.

Tim Burton's *ED WOOD*, due to open in October, wisely and forgivingly forsakes this final period of Wood's life, choosing to end on a note of high expectation: at the cast and crew screening for *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*, Wood/Johnny Depp prophetically proclaims, "This is the one they'll remember me for!" This is as it should be, for what there is to learn about Wood's oddball artistry as a filmmaker (his best films, despite all, exert a unique and feverish pull upon the viewer), lies in the first two periods of his days in Lotus Land.

Following a youth spent gazing at movies, mostly westerns, Universal horror films and serials, in the Bardavon Theatre in Poughkeepsie (a theatre he eventually became an usher for), Wood decided to head west. In 1948, after a tour of duty as a Marine in the Pacific, he arrived in the Dream Factory, Hollywood, brimming with smalltown optimism and hell-bent on becoming an actor/director like his idol Orson

WOOD MANIA

"PLAN 9" MOVIE MOGUL

Rights to the worst film ever made have paid off.

By John Thonen

In 1981, film collector Wade Williams was hired by Paramount Pictures to help them license film clips for their compilation film *IT CAME FROM HOLLYWOOD*. While the film itself (clips from supposedly bad films interspersed with truly bad comedy skits from the likes of Cheech and Chong, Dan

Aykroyd, and Gilda Radner) is a best forgotten abortion, Williams took its message to heart. Bad films were hip. Thus, Williams made the then seemingly indefensible decision to buy the rights to Ed Wood's classic of bad cinema,

PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE from Wood's widow. Learning from her of a never released Wood epic, *NIGHT OF THE GHOULS*, that had been languishing at a post-production house for decades because Wood never had the money for the lab fees, Williams paid the debt and acquired that film as well.

When Tim Burton decided to bring Wood's life to the screen, he would have to turn to Williams for the rights to reshoot portions of the master's opus. It was only the latest in a long line of financial windfalls that Williams has reaped from often tiny investments (reportedly in the mid-four figures for *PLAN 9*)

and his personal love of film and the fantastic genres. Through the years, Williams has become a sometimes controversial figure in science fiction fandom and has dabbled in everything from right-wing politics to film production and exhibition. But it's always been the movies that have driven him.

Like many fans, Williams has devoted much of his life and income to a love, perhaps obsession, with fantastic films. What separates him from the average film fanatic is the amazing entrepreneurial quality, and just plain old luck, that has led him to build a mini-empire out of his passion, while most other fans simply build stacks of memorabilia in their closets.

Williams still vividly remembers sitting before his parents' TV in the early '50s and watching the first episode of *SPACE PATROL*. Like most kids in his neighborhood, he collected many of the merchandise tie-ins the show spawned and idolized its stars. Unlike any kid in his neighborhood, or much of anywhere else, he grew up to buy the rights to the old series, successfully marketing it to cable TV, befriending some of its now aged stars and even attempting the production of a theatrical feature based on the series.

Purchasing rights from filmmakers, relatives, even the entire line of defunct production companies, Williams' stable of



TV horror hostess Vampira in Wood's *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*. Film entrepreneur Wade Williams picked up the film rights from Wood's widow, Kathy.

films would come to include such classics as *DESTINATION MOON*, *ROCKETSHIP XM* and *INVADERS FROM MARS*, on down to the likes of *CATWOMEN OF THE MOON*, *DEVIL GIRL FROM MARS*, *FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER*, *HIDEOUS SUN DEMON*, the ubiquitous *PLAN 9* and the show that started it all, *SPACE PATROL*. "I can see now that it was pretty silly," said Williams. "What mortal can hope to own his own childhood? But I do think that was what drove me."

While Williams acquired most of his films at a time when home video wasn't even a twinkle in Sony's eye, the booming video market of the '80s proved insatiable in its appetite for product. Soon all of his properties were released on tape, and most remain available today. Few have been enormous sellers, but there is a steady interest in them that has brought Williams an annual six-figure income, making them profitable many times over his initial investment. Williams reaped another windfall in 1986 from Cannon's disastrous remake of *INVADERS FROM MARS*. To obtain the rights to the original

story for director Tobe Hooper, Cannon gave Williams more than 50 times the amount he paid for the rights, rights which had long since been profitable to him from video and TV sales of the film.

Williams has proved less successful in mounting his own film productions, including *MIDNIGHT MOVIE MASSACRE* and a remake of *DETOUR*, among others. "I've made a fortune off other people's films, and lost a good portion of it on my own," said Williams, who maintained he has given up on producing. "I just don't think it's worth the aggravation."

Currently Williams is marketing rights to a musical he is half owner of, based on *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* (see sidebar page 36), and plans to restore the virtually lost silent classic *DELUGE*. Williams owns the only known negative, and is making plans to move onto a five-acre spread financed by the income from Burton's rights purchase of *PLAN 9*. In a paraphrasing of George Lucas' celebrated "Skywalker Ranch," a smiling Williams has dubbed the property... "The Plan 9 Ranch." □



Owner Wade Williams.

WOOD, THE FUNDRAISER

“He was a very suave individual with a charming personality, getting someone to invest in a movie,” said partner Crawford Thomas. “He kind of crept up on you.”

Welles.

According to Rudolph Grey, author of *Nightmare of Ecstasy: The Life and Art of Edward D. Wood Jr.*, Wood had crossed the country with a traveling carnival, working as the “He-She” and the geek, arguably the lowest forms of performance in the carny caste system. “I would say that his experiences in the carnival had a deep effect upon him,” noted Grey. “Later, he made use of them in several of his exploitation novels, including *Mary-Go-Round* and *Carnival Piece*.”

Wood’s willingness to act as the carny’s Half-Man/Half Woman indicates he was by then already a transvestite. Having met and spoken with Wood’s own mother before she died, (his mother outlived Wood by many years) Grey had a theory about Wood’s deviation. “It seemed to me that the mother wanted a daughter,” said Gray. “Evidently they did dress him up in girl’s clothes. And Wood’s own comment to people years later was, ‘They didn’t know what the hell they were doing to me!’ If you’re dressed up in little girl’s clothes at the age of 5, you really don’t have much choice in what happens afterwards.”

If Wood’s parents were partly responsible for his later transvestism, they also fostered his precocious fascination with the movies. “Ed’s parents definitely encouraged his creative side,” said Grey. “When he was just 11 they gave him a movie camera and Ed started shooting his own home movies.”

Wood’s attraction to acting, which he indulged in periodically throughout his career, was strongest in his first few years in Hollywood. It seems to have faded with time, perhaps as his desire to be an auteur increased. Initially however, he found work performing at a theatre called the Gateway, where families could come to eat pretzels, sip beer and soda and watch hissable melodramas with titles like “The Drunkard,” and “The Blackguard Returns.” There, Wood met a fellow actor named John Crawford Thomas, who would turn out to be the financier/producer of Wood’s first real foray into filmmaking. The result of their teaming was a never-completed effort called **CROSSROADS OF LAREDO**.

Shot silent, their low-budget western is stilted and amateur-

Wood (r), Errol Flynn handsome in 1955, signing the contracts to direct **BRIDE OF THE MONSTER** with co-stars Bela Lugosi and Dolores Fuller (l).



The 1959 two-color movie poster for Wood’s infamous “sci-fi” epic, dubbed “the worst film ever made.”

ish, but has a few moments of would-be poetry, such as shots of a lonely dog hanging about near a hillside western funeral. Crawford Thomas is today a successful Los Angeles roofer. He recalled that Wood ran through the budget money for the production well before they could finish, and that the results were far from satisfactory.

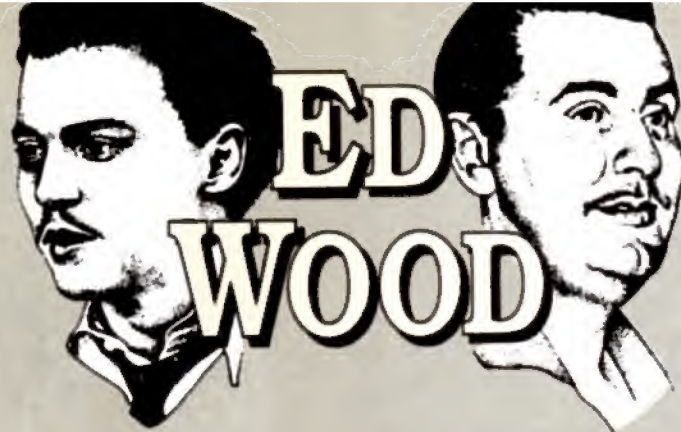
“I wasn’t very happy with some of the techniques he used,” said Thomas. “He just grabbed the camera and started shooting, with no preparation. We shot on war surplus film and the borrowed camera wasn’t even clean. We had a scratch down the center of the negative. I basically refused to put any more money into it at that point. I could see it all just going out the window. My parents were dead against it at the time and I was fighting that battle, too.”

Wood used the offices he shared with Thomas as produc-

ers (which also served as their living quarters) to piece together his next venture. “There was a steady stream of all kinds of people coming into the office with different deals and options of moviemaking,” said Thomas. “I think he was in the process of getting someone else to invest \$10,000 in another movie that he had in mind. He was a very suave individual with a charming personality. He kind of crept up on you.”

Wood knocked around Hollywood for the next few years, accomplishing little but making contacts with the aging has-been cameraman William C. Thompson (who’d light most of Wood’s films) and neophyte producer Alex Gordon, with whom Wood briefly shared an apartment. It was through Gordon that Wood met one of his childhood idols, the by-then down-and-out horror star Bela Lugosi.

continued on page 27



PLAYING BELA LUGOSI

Martin Landau stars as the revered horror actor.

By Lawrence French

Although Martin Landau is well known for his roles on the television series *MIS-SION: IMPOSSIBLE* and *SPACE 1999*, he is less known as an accomplished acting teacher and disciple of Lee Strasberg, the dean of the famous Actors Studio, where such method actors as Marlon Brando, Paul Newman and James Dean learned their craft. Among Landau's own acting students have been such notables as Jack Nicholson, Oliver Stone and Harry Dean Stanton.

Like most good actors, Landau approaches his parts with careful analysis of the character, and responds best to well-written material. He recalls being pleasantly surprised when Tim Burton asked him to play Bela Lugosi in *ED WOOD*. "Tim called me out of the blue," said Landau, "and when I read the screenplay I said, 'Wow!' I loved the script, it was funny and tragic and the character is so rich. It was a very complicated part, because everyone knows who Bela Lugosi is. His screen persona is so well known and all of his movies are still out there. He's a totally recognizable human being and I have to convince people that I'm him!

"I said to myself, 'How does one approach this?' First of all, I have to look like him, I have to talk like him and I have to behave like him. There are scenes from actual movies he's making, and you see him before the scene, during the scene and after the scene. We began with



Landau as Lugosi (I) with George Steele as Tor Johnson and Juliet Landau (Martin's daughter) as Loretta King, filming Burton's ersatz *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER*.

the makeup tests. Rick Baker did them, and they taught us a lot. I didn't want a heavy makeup. I wanted something minimal, so I have freedom with my face. Rick designed a nose and we got rid of my upper lip, which is very abundant, while Lugosi's was thin. Then we added ears over mine, because Lugosi had mammoth ears. He also had a cleft in his chin, so we added that and added a little to my eyebrows. That was it. All the rest was acting."

During the initial makeup tests, Landau realized that Lugosi had certain facial limitations that he would need to master for his performance. "My face is more expressive than Lugosi's," explained Landau. "I had to minimize certain things my face does and learn about his facial muscles. What happens to his eyes when he was happy, or angry, or sad? I worked on that so it became second nature to me. I watched

25 of his movies, and seven interviews he gave as himself, going from 1931 to the year he died in 1956, as well as actual newsreel footage when he got out of the hospital after kicking his drug habit. I could then react, not as I would react, but as Lugosi would react. Ultimately I walk differently, I behave differently and I sound differently. I got the Hungarian accent down and I noticed he talked differently when he was off-camera. His voice went down."

Unlike some of his co-stars, Landau never felt the need to give an intentionally bad performance. "Lugosi was never really a bad actor," declared Landau. "He was over the top and had marched to his own sort of drum-beat, but you can't take your eyes off of him. He had an amazing presence. One of the reasons Tim said he cast me, was because of the kind of presence the part needed, that not too many people have. Lugosi

had a terrific kind of magnetism and an intensity that was enormous. Yet he was a very down-to-earth, old-world, erudite man, who loved good music, was well-read and also had a mouth like a truck driver when he lost his temper. Ed Wood doesn't really curse. He'll say things like, 'darn' and 'gosh' or 'heck,' but Lugosi, when he's triggered, runs off at the mouth with profanities. It's an interesting contrast. There's a scene where Conrad Brooks asks me for an autograph, and he said, 'I thought you were great in *THE INVISIBLE RAY*, where you played Karloff's sidekick.' Well, I go bonkers, absolutely berserk. I

tear up the autograph and start yelling, 'Karloff! How dare you. That cocksucker doesn't deserve to smell my shit!'" The scene is already a bone of contention with those who really knew Lugosi and feel such swearing is totally out of character.

Landau recalled the inspiration for the scene of Lugosi playing Dr. Vornoff in *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER*, as an envoy from his homeland invites him to return and Dr. Vornoff declines. "That scene was put into *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER*, because of a story Bela told Ed Wood," said Landau. "The Hungarians actually invited Bela back to Hungary, to become the minister of culture. He never knew though, if it was a legitimate request, or whether the communist government would have thrown him in prison, to make an example of him. He never went back. He's playing a mad scientist, but there was an analogous aspect

“I loved the script. It was funny and tragic and the character is so rich. I didn’t want a heavy makeup. I wanted something minimal so I have freedom with my face.”



Johnny Depp as Ed Wood and Landau as Lugosi, reminiscing about playing DRACULA in the actor’s apartment. Burton’s off-beat idea of a buddy movie.

to it.”

Lugosi was an actor whose performances were usually larger than life and Landau had to tread a fine line between underplaying and overacting. “Lugosi was theatrical,” said Landau, “but I never wanted the audience to feel I was an actor chewing the scenery. I didn’t want people to think, ‘It’s Martin Landau, look what he’s doing.’ I felt it had to be Lugosi’s theatricality, not mine. It’s a large performance and it runs the gamut, but it’s all rooted in truth and I never felt I had to tone it down.”

Interestingly enough, Landau was able to draw on his own misfortunes in Hollywood and use them in his portrayal of Lugosi. “I understood Bela’s pain,” admitted Landau. “I knew his ups and downs. I certainly didn’t have as difficult a time as he did, but I’ve had my share. I’ve never had to drive a

cab, or wait on tables, but there was a point when I wasn’t very happy with the roles I was getting. After I went to England to do television, people forgot I was an actor. For a while I was playing mindless heavies in meaningless movies. I had a dearth of good parts, until Francis [Coppola] cast me in TUCKER. That was finally a real part, with some layers to it and I thought it would help me break out, which it did.”

Landau enjoyed playing Lugosi enormously, but never got into it so deeply he forgot he was playing a part, the way that Lugosi supposedly thought he was Dracula. “I used the time sitting in the makeup chair to get into the role,” said Landau, “and when I took off the makeup, I left the part. After the first week, I really had him in me though. I could talk like him, react like him, I could have even done a vaudeville act as Bela

Lugosi. It became totally organic for me. It just grabbed onto my bones and I began to feel very comfortable in Bela and he in me. It sounds a little schizophrenic, but I was playing someone who is a real icon.”

Strangely enough, Landau played Dracula on the stage for six months in 1984, in the Edward Gorey touring production. Although it was the same play Lugosi acted on Broadway in 1927, Landau doesn’t feel it helped him play Lugosi in ED WOOD. “It might have helped subliminally, but not consciously,” he said. “It was a very different DRACULA than Lugosi did. I didn’t try to do Lugosi at all. I went at it a whole different way. It was a more tongue-in-cheek version and Tim never even knew I did it.”

Landau had to play Lugosi when he’s sober, when he’s been drinking and when he shoots-up with morphine. “I was able to approach those scenes with all kinds of colors,” remarked Landau. “The range in the role is very great. In my day I’ve had drinks, but I’ve certainly never done morphine or heroin. I pretty much know what kind of high that is, the kind of tremendous rush you get. When he’s high, he’s very high. When he’s down, he’s very down. It was great, because Tim is the kind of director who opens the doors and lets you go with it.”

Landau first came out to Hollywood in 1958, a few years after the events in ED WOOD take place. “It was funny doing the movie, because looking at the period cars and fashions, it looked like it did when I first got here. Jimmy Dean was my best friend and after he died, Vampira came to New York and sought me out.”

Vampira, the horror TV hostess who appeared in PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE, was apparently insulted by James

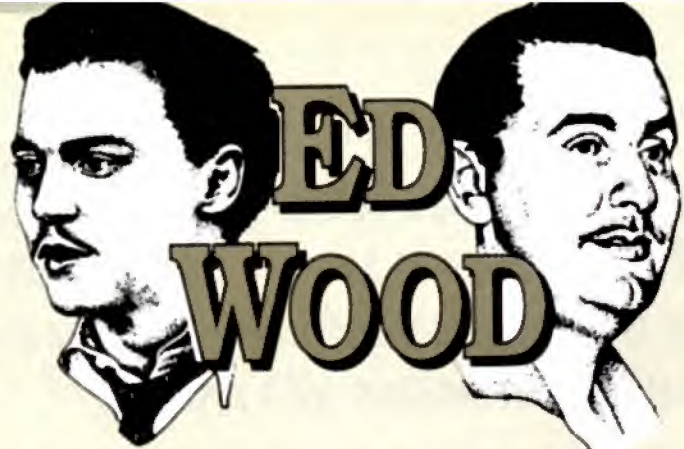
Dean when they met, and subsequently placed a black magic spell on the actor. “She believed she had powers that I’m not too sure she actually possessed,” said Landau. “I think she’d put a curse on anybody, as a whim. We had dinner though and I must say she was a very attractive girl in those days. I think she started to believe she was Vampira, and not just a character on television.”

Summing up his experience on ED WOOD, Landau said, “I loved the challenge of doing it. It was a great set to work on, and Tim and Johnny and I had a day of mourning when it was all over.”

Landau may well find his hard work rewarded next year, when the gold statuettes are handed out. Hollywood would have a chance to not only honor a fine performance, but through Landau, a way of honoring the talented Hungarian actor, who died just a few years before the television revival of his classic films would endow him with endless fame. □

The genuine article. Lugosi in 1953, as he appeared in Wood’s GLEN OR GLENDA, puppetmaster of mankind.





DEADRINGER FOR TOR

Wrestler George Steele on playing the horror icon.

By Mark Carducci

Hulking Swedish wrestler-turned-actor Tor Johnson's (actually Johannson) face is perhaps *the* definitive Ed Wood movie icon. But when the clarion call went out for an actor to play Tor in Tim Burton's *ED WOOD*, there weren't many who could measure up, either in girth or likeness. At one point, Burton alumnus Glenn Shadix (*BEETLEJUICE*, *DEMOLITION MAN*) was seriously considered for the role, but the assignment finally went to yet another wrestler-turned-actor, the World Wrestling Federation's George "The Animal" Steele, aka Jim Myers.

Myers no longer wrestles, but still works for the WWF in a

Steele, a.k.a. Jim Myers, as the Super Swedish Angel, Tor Johnson's wrestling moniker, in *ED WOOD*.



creative capacity. He was contacted out of the blue by the ED WOOD casting agents, who were thunderstruck by his uncanny physical resemblance to Tor.

Myers, a deep-voiced, laconic man with whom one wouldn't willingly want to tangle, informed on the set while still in his *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* scar makeup that he is a deadringer for Tor, gave a sideways glowering glance that seemed to say, "Thanks a lot, pal."

Myers' somewhat threatening appearance is belied by a deliberate and sharp intelligence. Asked by Burton to audition on video, introducing himself and relating vital statistics and biographical information, Myers produced a comedy short instead.

"I had a guy walk on camera with a Federal Express box and say, 'Federal Express for Tor Johnson!' Then I said, 'I'm Tor Johnson, can't you see I'm busy here.' So I accept the box. But then he makes me sign for it. Getting fed up with this aggravation, I pick the guy up by the throat and throw him. Then a voice behind me tells me to leave the little guy alone. I turn around...and it's one of our wrestlers who's seven feet tall! There's a line in the *ED WOOD* script Tor has: 'You take charge.' So I turn to the camera and say, 'You take charge, Tim, I'm outta here.' And the reaction from everybody on the film was great fun, a lot of laughs."



Steele as Tor Johnson and Lisa Marie as Vampira, haunting a tacky graveyard set in Tim Burton's recreation of Wood's *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*.

But Myers' "audition" didn't end there. A second videotape was requested by Burton, this one of Myers reading Tor's dialogue from the *ED WOOD* script. "My wife directed, produced, did the lighting, and threw me the lines right in our living room," said Myers. "I went through the script and did all of Tor's lines. The next thing I heard was that they wanted me to stop in and meet Tim while I was doing a show at the L.A. Sports Arena. Which I did. I didn't know what to expect. I'd never met Tim before. It was a 15 minute meeting, during which Tim showed me pictures of Tor, showed me the likeness of the two of us and that was that. I went home and told my wife I didn't think it was going to happen. But, about a month later, I got a call telling me they wanted me to start."

Myers worked for three weeks with a dialogue coach, in order to develop a convincing Swedish accent for the Super

Swedish Angel, as Tor was known in his wrestling days.

As with practically all of ED WOOD's cast and crew, Myers' research for the role required the reading of the Ed Wood biography *Nightmare of Ecstasy: The Life and Art of Edward D. Wood Jr.* by Rudolph Gray. Disney purchased the film rights to Gray's book as a one-stop shopping source for the rights to Wood's life. Myers also viewed a videotape of Tor's uproarious appearance as a contestant on Groucho Marx's old game show *YOU BET YOUR LIFE*. "That was *very* helpful," avowed Myers.

Myers' resemblance to Tor Johnson was so complete that he required little in the way of effects makeup—a scar on his face for *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* sequences, and a more elaborate scar and contact lenses in his eyes for *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER* sequences. But something *was* done to give him extra height, producing an unexpected bonus.

“Johnny Depp, Bill Murray and Martin Landau all went out of their way to help me,” said Steele. “But I don’t want to get bitten by the acting bug. I know the problems.”



The real Vampira (Malla Nurmi) and Tor Johnson, on the spaceship set of Wood’s celebrated low-budgeter, so awful it became a camp classic.

“One difference between Tor and I is that I’m a high-energy person,” said Myers. “Tor was a very low-energy person, slow, unsure of his language. For the film I wear shoes that give me some extra height. But they also tend to slow me down, so I move more the way Tor moved. It was Tim’s idea.”

Though Myers knew next to nothing about Johnson until called upon to portray him in *ED WOOD*, throughout his colorful and successful wrestling career many had remarked upon his resemblance to Tor. Myers recalled discovering he had a look-alike. “It was maybe 15 years ago, in New York,” said Myers. “Bruno San Martino is World Champion. I’m the number one contender. We’re selling out the Garden, three, four shows running. And, walking down Broadway, I go into one of these novelty-gimmick shops. And there’s a mask that looks like me. The mask had a sign under it, calling it the George ‘The Animal’ Steele

mask. So I ask about it, who gave them the copyright and the guy tells me it’s really a Tor Johnson mask.”

Asked if Tim Burton gave him any special direction regarding his performance, Myers shook his head in the negative. “The only things he said were to try to be as natural as I could and work from that, and to put on a few more pounds. Because Tor weighed 385, a lot more than I do.”

Myers found the experience of working on the feature film surprisingly enjoyable. Perhaps too enjoyable. “Johnny Depp, Bill Murray, Martin Landau, Jeffrey Jones...all of these people made me feel at home, and went out of their way to help me,” said Myers. “Tim is so clear, it’s so easy to work with him. I can’t say enough about the experience. I don’t want to get bitten by the acting bug, I know the problems. But I really like it. The WWF comes first with me, but I’d definitely like to do more of this.” □

The Wood/Lugosi relationship lies at the heart of Wood’s checkered career, since most of Wood’s initial “successes” were films made expressly to trade upon the Lugosi legend. Their relationship is, in fact, the major focus of the Tim Burton film, for the same reason.

An international horror star for more than two decades, by the early ’50s Lugosi was old, in deteriorating health and sadly, virtually unemployable in Hollywood. Some of his career problems were certainly due to the well-known typecasting he suffered, as well as changing tastes in acting styles. But there were always the rumors of heavy drinking, a proud and obstinate nature, and even darker rumors of what we would today call substance abuse problems. These would eventually be proven true, confessed to publicly and pathetically by Lugosi himself, just prior to checking himself into a rehab clinic. Amazingly, Lugosi almost missed being cast as Dracula in Universal’s *ABBOTT & COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN* in 1948, when executives at the studio assumed he

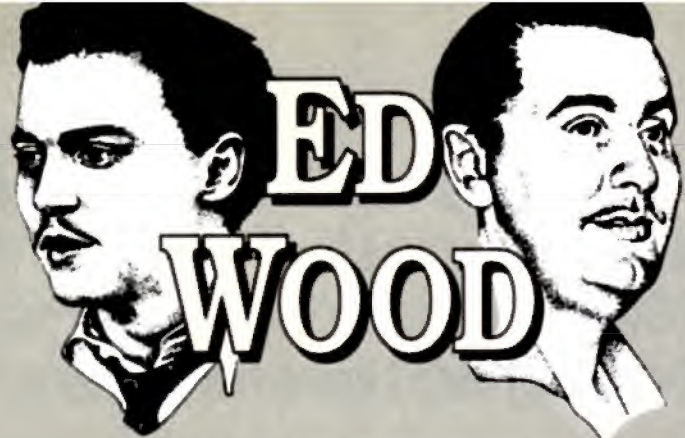
was already dead.

As Wood grew closer to Lugosi, running personal errands for him and chauffeuring him to the doctor or to the market (or to the liquor store), the idea of facilitating a comeback for the nearly forgotten horror star began to emerge.

The first cinematic fruit of this ambition was Wood’s first feature-length work, the infamous 1953 docudrama *GLEN OR GLENDA* (filmed under, among other titles, *TRANSVESTITE*). Wood played the lead himself, as well as wrote and directed. *GLEN OR GLENDA* is Wood’s surreal and impassioned plea for tolerance toward crossdressing. It charts one man’s desperate desire to find the courage to tell his fiancée about his private need to wear woman’s clothing. This was exploitive material and producer George Weiss (*DEVIL BABY* and other similarly lurid fare) knew he could sell it. But Wood immersed himself in the material and brought the film to unexpectedly compassionate, giddy heights. *GLEN OR GLENDA* is said to be a favorite of director David Lynch, testament

Lugosi in the funeral scenes of *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*, stock footage Wood shot before the actor’s death which served as the basis for the film.





MAKEUP

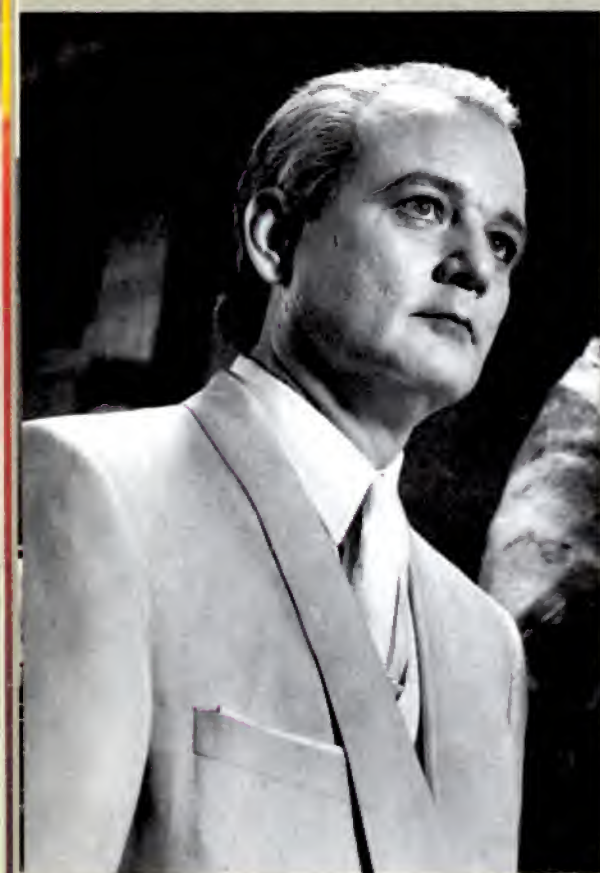
Ve Neil on working with designs by Rick Baker.

By Mark Carducci

Though not nearly as extensive as the makeup effects work called for in his previous films, the unusual and specific makeups for Tim Burton's *ED WOOD* required the star contribution of Rick Baker in a design capacity and of Ve Neil for on-set creation and application. Neil has worked for Burton on all of his films save *BATMAN* and *PEE WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE*, testament to her ability to speak the Burton language: "Make the faces paler and the eyes very dark," kidded Neil.

Many of the crewmembers on *ED WOOD* felt compelled to steep themselves in the curious details of Wood's life, in order

Bill Murray as Wood's gay acting friend John "Bunny" Breckinridge, given an effeminate, foppish look.



to bring their best to the unusual bio-pic, and Neil was no exception.

"We kind of had to," she explained, "because Ed Wood was just such a strange character himself. And few of us were all that familiar with the later films of Bela Lugosi, most of which were directed by Wood, or with his company of actors, such as Tor and Vampira. I'm not old enough to have seen Vampira on TV, but I did grow up seeing photos of her in magazines like *Famous Monsters of Filmland*."

As with many craftspeople working in makeup and special effects, the genre film magazines are a source of professional inspiration for her. "I still read all the magazines," said Neil. "I frequently read them on the set; then Tim [Burton] winds up reading my copies, because that's the only time he gets to see them."

"I love looking at the coverage of makeup effects. Since I was a little girl that's all I've ever wanted to do. But I was always told I couldn't, because I was a girl. I actually grew up next door to a man named Leo Lettino, who was the head of makeup at Burbank studios. When I knew him he was doing a western series, *THE VIRGINIAN*. His daughter was my best friend. He'd make us up on Halloween and I'd think, 'Yeah, this is what I want to do. My mother just didn't know where I was coming from, because I used to sit and watch horror movies and just scare myself to death.'"

Creating the makeup for actor Martin Landau's potentially



Filming *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER*, Johnny Depp as Ed Wood sets up a scene with Tor (George Steele), Loretta (Juliet Landau) and Bela (Martin Landau).

heart-rending transformation into Bela Lugosi was the single most complicated of *ED WOOD*'s makeups. It was a coveted challenge for both Rick Baker and Neil.

"Rick Baker designed the makeups for the film," said Neil. "He did the first makeup test with Martin. Tim wanted to make Martin look very old and sad and just not in the greatest of shape."

Landau's makeup as Lugosi was relatively simple. "It's a nose piece, an upper lip, and a chin, which has the very characteristic cleft Bela Lugosi had," said Neil. "The upper lip completely covers Martin's upper lip. Bela didn't really have one and Martin's own is quite defined. The nose is slightly larger than Martin's, and sort of turned down. And there are ears. He wears a hairpiece to match Bela's natural hair. Martin also wears a 'plumper' on his lower teeth. You almost never saw Bela Lugosi's teeth. I mixed up a tooth enamel, so when you see Martin's teeth they look very dark, because Lugosi smoked and drank. It's always the little subtle things you do that put something over. The appliances don't really alter his face to make him look like

Lugosi, they just make him resemble him. Rick was very clever in the way he did it. Rick wanted to keep it as simple as possible to get the best advantage of Martin's facial structure. Bela's face was shorter. But with Martin's acting, holding his head in a certain way, and with particular camera angles, and, finally, with the makeup, we've really managed to capture Lugosi."

Neil revealed that, for Johnny Depp's physical metamorphosis into director manque Wood, very little makeup was called for.

"We put a moustache on him after the *GLEN OR GLENDA* scenes. Johnny also wears dentures on his lower teeth. It alters his speech pattern and gives his face a slightly different shape. It's very subtle."

Turning ex-wrestler Jim Myers and actress Lisa Marie into *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*'s signature couple, Tor Johnson and Vampira, also proved simpler than Landau's transformation.

"We have scenes with Jim Myers where he's playing Tor in *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER*, and he has this really awful scar down the side of his face," said Neil. "Usually I

CRAZY ABOUT ANGORA

“I found out he liked dressing gowns and high heels,” recalled partner Crawford Thomas of Wood. “He even tried to get me to go out and buy some with him once.”



Neil outfitted Steele with a scar as Tor Johnson; Landau as Lugosi featured a nose, upper lip and chin prosthetic; and Depp was fitted with lower dentures.

haven't had the time to apply this myself, so one of our extra makeup people does it. And I just say to make it look bad, and show them a picture of Tor from the film.

“For scenes in which Tor would go to screenings in makeup, for publicity purposes, I suspected that his makeup must have been applied very hastily. So, those makeups look really bad. The PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE makeup isn't much, just a little pale base and a couple of scratches on his face, a little dark eyeliner and his contact lenses in.”

Neil executed three distinct looks for Lisa Marie's Vampira, the original Mistress of the Dark. “First is her Vampira TV show look,” said Neil. “For that, Tim wanted her to look very pretty, just like Vampira. It's a different concept of beauty makeup. Beauty makeup is usually up and out and pretty. And Vampira's look is down and kind of sardonic looking. Lisa Marie is so pretty naturally that it's hard to make her look real down and angry.

“Her other Vampira look is the way she looks in PLAN 9, a real ugly mouth with the droopy corners. The eyeliner goes downwwwn. Lastly, we also see

Lisa Marie as Maila Nurmi herself, completely out of any Vampira makeup. And we're making her very avant garde and sort of beatnik. Her hair is long and blonde, though the style for women at that time was much shorter. Her makeup is somewhat similar to the Vampira makeup, but much softer and more refined.”

In a minor but memorable role in ED WOOD, funny man Bill Murray portrays John Breckenridge, the foppish actor who played the lead alien on the mothership in PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE. Murray had to undergo a campy makeover to play this wealthy, aristocratic, homosexual member of Wood's freakish stock company, who often went by the nickname of “Bunny.”

“Bill Murray is heavily made up,” laughed Neil. “From what we understand, Bunny Breckenridge wore makeup all the time in real life. So we did that with Bill. He wears eyeshadow and eyeliner and has a slightly effeminate look to him. Not girly, but soft. In PLAN 9, Bunny was always looking down at his desk, which was actually out of frame but supposedly had his script there for him to read his

continued on page 61

perhaps to the film's essentially successful surrealism.

Crawford Thomas recalled being astounded by how deeply Wood had dug into his own psychology for the film. “One day Ed was telling me how much he liked angora sweaters,” said Thomas. “It went on and on, and I kind of nodded my head and just listened. It reminded me of Queeg in THE CAINE MUTINY, with the steel balls. He was very straightforward about it, yet at the same time he was a very masculine individual. Later, I found out he liked dressing gowns and high heels. He even tried to get me to go out and buy some with him one time. There was an opaque window across the hall in the suite of offices we shared, and through it I could see he'd sometimes be wearing a woman's dress.

“When I finally saw GLEN OR GLENDA,” continued Thomas, “I marveled at the depth to which this aberration had penetrated his psyche. He was very serious about that particular production. It wasn't made just for the money.”

Derisive rumors that Wood habitually directed his productions in drag can be traced to GLEN OR GLENDA, for which he had to direct several scenes while in woman's clothing, in order to also act in his sequences as “Glenda.”

In GLEN OR GLENDA, Wood made bizarre use of Bela Lugosi as an omniscient Puppetmaster of Mankind. The standard view of their collaborations has been that Wood exploited Lugosi as a boxoffice shill to further his own fledgling career. But those who knew both men felt otherwise.

Actress Valda Hansen, who played the White Ghost in Wood's NIGHT OF THE GHOULS (1959), insists it was a true friendship, and said Wood spoke to her often of his

memories of Bela. “Ed [said he] loved to be with Bela, not just working together but as a human being. They were both kind of cut-ups. You wouldn't think Bela Lugosi was, but he was. They would go to the cemetery and Bela would put on his black cape and Ed, with his pixieish whimsical nature, would run through the cemetery with Bela after him and they would just have a ball.”

Vampira corroborated the view that Ed and Bela's partnership was about more than their mutual careers. “It grew into a really beautiful friendship,” said Vampira. “Ed was there for Bela, because Ed was a sweet, tender heart, and this man was sick and dying, old, friendless and poor and in need of medicine.”

Wood followed GLEN OR GLENDA with JAILBAIT (1955). For the most part, throughout his career Wood alternated horror films with exploitative social melodramas. JAILBAIT was the first. Others included the

Valda Hansen, the starlet of Wood's NIGHT OF THE GHOULS, recalled Wood's genuine fondness for Lugosi.



The screen's master of the WEIRD...
IN HIS NEWEST and MOST DARING
SHOCKER!

BELA LUGOSI

More horrifying than "DRACULA" - "FRANKENSTEIN"

IT'LL MAKE YOUR
SKIN CRAWL!

BRIDE OF THE MONSTER

TOR JOHNSON · TONY MCCOY
LORETTA KING · HARVEY JUMEN
EDWARD D. WOOD, Jr.
ALEX GORDON

The two-color poster for Wood's second film with Bela Lugosi, directed in 1956 for producer Alex Gordon.

screenplay for *THE VIOLENT YEARS* (1956), about a gun-crazy girl gang, and writing and directing *THE SINISTER URGE* (1961), a stiffly dramatized, typically (for Wood) moralizing exploitation film about the "inevitable" link between pornography and the homicidal urge.

Next for Wood came *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER* (1956), his second collaboration with Bela Lugosi. Despite the fact that Bela was in increasing ill health, his lead role as a mad scientist was much larger than the novel, though minor part he played in *GLEN OR GLENDA*. The film also marked the debut of another now-famous member of Wood's so-called stock company, wrestler-turned actor Tor Johnson.

Due largely to the three films

Johnson made with Wood, the actor's round, bald, grimacing face has become classic low-budget horror movie iconography. Born Tor Johansson on October 19, 1903 in Sweden, the actor died in 1971. He appeared in at least 25 films, always typecast as "heavies," in the most figurative and literal sense. Johnson occasionally worked for the majors on a film and even squared off in a wrestling match against Dan Blocker on TV's *BONANZA*. Johnson's fame with the public at large was solidified via a latex mask, put out by the Don Post company in the '60s. Don Post Jr. claimed it was the best selling mask the company ever released.

Apparently, the real-life Tor Johnson was a classic "gentle giant." Recalled actress Valda Hansen, "Tor was like a sugar bun inside. I used to go out to dinner with him. Here was this

LUGOSI'S ADDICTION

"Lugosi had one of those sterno heaters," recalled actor Paul Marco. "He took out a sterile needle and gave himself a shot. He said, 'Pauly, I feel real good right now.'"

massive man and here his wife, a very petite little woman. And she'd say, 'Now Papa, don't do this,' and Tor would say, 'Yes, Mama.'"

Vampirica recollected an incident with the huge actor, that happened during a car trip to a public appearance for Wood. Bela Lugosi was along for the ride, as well. "Before I agreed to do *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* I was doing publicity stunts for Ed," said Vampirica. "We rented a hearse one night. We had a chauffeur who was dressed up like a gravedigger from old European films, with a tall stovepipe hat. We went to Inglewood and hit a few theatres, but while we were at one theatre some teenagers wrecked the hearse, so we had to take a taxi back. As we were coming over the dark La Brea hills toward Hollywood, this car full of teenage hot-rodders had followed us, and forced us over to the side of the road. There was no habitation and it was very dark. The cabdriver wanted to call the police on his radio but Tor said, 'No, don't do it, let me talk to them.' Tor rolled down the back window and said, 'Come here.' The boys came over and he said, 'Be good boys, go home.' I guess they

were intimidated by his size. They went home. It was lovely."

Wood clearly knew he had a good thing in Johnson. With little or no makeup, and for a minimal salary, he had himself a walking talking "monster." In *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER*, Tor played Lobo, Bela Lugosi's grunting man-servant.

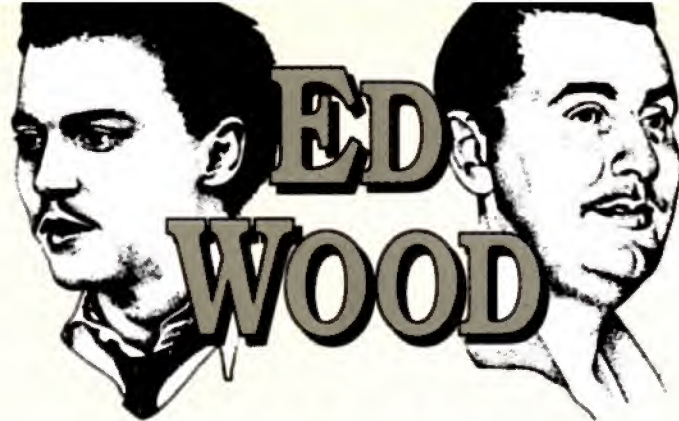
During production it was apparent to all that Bela Lugosi's health was failing fast. And the proud actor's decade-long, medically-induced addiction to morphine was a secret to no one close to the production. Actor Paul Marco, who played Kelton the Cop for Wood in three films, recalled having to break shooting on *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER* in the middle of a cold night in Griffith Park, in order to drive Lugosi home for a rejuvenating injection of what Lugosi called "his medicine."

Recalled Marco, "When we got to his apartment it was dark. He had just a little night light in the living room and the first thing that caught my eye was this huge painting of him with a cape on. He looked like Count Dracula. Bela said, 'Do you want to sit in the other room, Pauly? Maybe you don't ap-

continued on page 35

Filming *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER*, Tor Johnson towers over Wood (l) and Gordon (r), who once roomed with Wood and introduced him to Bela Lugosi.





FLYING SAUCER MYTHS

No, Wood didn't use Cadillac hubcaps in PLAN 9.

By Mark Patrick
Carducci

One of the most cherished of Ed Wood's film images are the shots of the wobbly flying saucers on strings, used with an unblinking authority throughout *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*. Popular legend had it they were, variously, paper plates, pie tins, or a Cadillac's hubcap. Wood himself promulgated the hubcap myth. Admittedly, it made for a funnier story.

Research uncovered an interview with Wood, in which he told the unvarnished truth—he had simply gone to a local hobby shop and purchased commercially available model flying saucer kits. In the late '50s there seemed to be only one, manufactured by the Lindberg model company, of Skokie, Illinois.

Tim Burton's *ED WOOD* sees fit to "print the legend" in regard to Wood's saucers. The film contains sequences with Johnny Depp constructing the saucer models out of cardboard dining plates and puppeteering them on fishing poles over an outsized, appropriately cartoonish miniature of the Hollywood sign. It's a great visual that speaks volumes about Wood even as it entertains.

The prop-making team of Jules Kmetzko and Jim Bandsuh made the paper plate saucers for *ED WOOD*. "Tim is trying to paint Ed as very creative, someone who was able to take a few odds and ends and make something magical," said Kmetzko.

Numerous design variations for the saucers were created, and Burton took his pick. "Tim



Collector and Wood associate Bob Burns with one of the original saucers from Wood's film (r) and the paper plate version made for Burton's *ED WOOD*.

finally went for the most stripped down, purest look," said Kmetzko. The propmakers used Diamond brand paper plates, two dinner plates for the body and a desert dish for the dome, sprayed them with aluminum spray paint. "We found out in the '50s they had paint with real aluminum flakes in it," said Kmetzko. "We found this ad from the period advertising Liquid Aluminum. We actually recreated that name on the spray cans Johnny Depp sprays the saucers with in the film."

Noted prop collector Bob Burns, also the former partner of '50s effects man Paul Blaisdell, is today the proud owner of the two remaining saucer miniatures from the original *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*. A third model was set on fire and burned up during shooting.

Burns actually knew Ed Wood, having met him about six months prior to *PLAN 9*'s shooting at a gathering of sci-

ence fiction fans. "I just liked him right off," said Burns with a smile. "He was there trying to raise money for a film."

And Burns was present at the cast and crew screening of *PLAN 9*. "Ed invited me," said Burns. "It was a small theatre in a rundown area downtown. Only about 400 seats. We sat next to Tor Johnson and his family. During the film, when one of Tor's scenes would go by, he'd say out loud, in his distinctive voice, 'That's good—that's good.'"

Though Burns knew Wood, he came into possession of the saucers in an unexpected manner, only eight years ago, in a lot of props bought from Ray Mercer Effects, which had done the optical work for the film.

Burns recalled feeling badly for Wood during the washed-up director's last days, as did all who knew Wood. The director paid Burns an unexpected visit not long before he died, while Burns was working at CBS, edit-

ing feature films for broadcast on television. "He came in drunk, the poor guy," said Burns. "He said he was living in his car. He'd lost his apartment and said he needed a little stake. I gave him all the money I had, fifty bucks."

Burns was a welcome visitor to the set of Burton's *ED WOOD*, and even became one of the film's unofficial creative consultants, filling-in Johnny Depp on what Ed Wood was like. As a reward, Burns was given two of the paper plate saucers from the production, perfect compliments to his two *PLAN 9* originals.

Burns feels Burton's *ED WOOD* is taking the ideal approach to Wood's life and career. Wood's ability to get his independent films made was what first appealed to Burns about Wood when he met him, and it's that same appeal that he feels is being celebrated in *ED WOOD*.

"This picture isn't going to dwell on the negative," said Burns. "Tim Burton is making a film about a little guy who got to make his movies against all odds." □

Wood's saucer, built from a store-bought model kit, as it appeared in *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*.



TIM BURTON'S ED WOOD

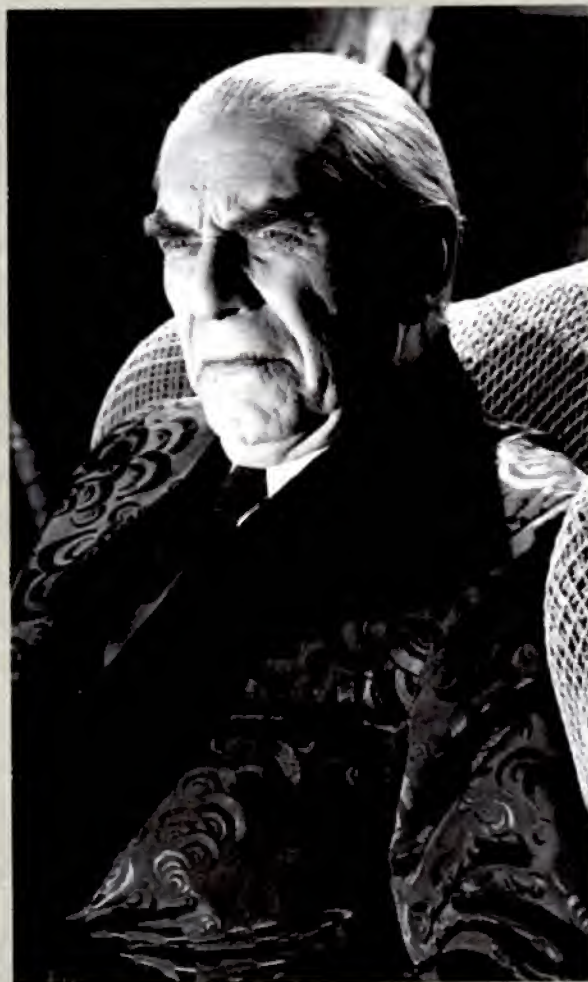
Burton on his black & white ode to a different kind of auteur.

By Lawrence French

"Greetings, my friend. You are interested in the unknown, the mysterious, the unexplainable...that is why you are here. So now, for the first time, we are giving you all the evidence, based only on the secret testimony of the miserable souls who survived this terrifying ordeal. Can your hearts stand the shocking facts of the true story of Edward D. Wood Jr.?"

So intones famed psychic to the stars, Criswell, in the opening prologue of Tim Burton's *ED WOOD*, a rigorously faithful adaptation of five tumultuous years in the life of the film director whose name has become synonymous with lack of talent. Touchstone Pictures is due to open director Tim Burton's quirky ode to Wood in October.

Poughkeepsie, New York was the birthplace of Ed Wood, and the place where Burton decided to turn Ed Wood's life into a movie. Screenwriters Larry Karaszewski and Scott Alexander had written a treatment that, at first Burton thought he would produce, but not direct. "I was staying at a farmhouse out near Poughkeepsie," remembered Burton, "and I started to read



Martin Landau as Bela Lugosi, in makeup designed by Rick Baker. After Landau's makeup tests Burton chose to film in b&w.

Nightmare of Ecstasy [the Ed Wood Biography]. Then I found that Ed was from Poughkeepsie and I started to get into it thematically. There were a lot of things happening that I could relate to. I was thinking about doing the movie, after hanging out in Poughkeepsie a little bit and reading about Ed.

"I wanted to do it, but we didn't have a script. Scott and

Larry wrote the script in the quickest amount of time I've ever seen. They must have had it in their heads already, because they wrote it in about a month. I read the script and liked what they had written very much. Then I really wanted to direct it. I like it when things go real fast. They wrote it very quickly and sometimes when you do that, there's not a lot of hashing it over. It just is, what it is."

"It's got a strange edge to it," said Martin Landau, a two-time Academy Award nominee, who was Burton's first and only choice to play the pivotal role of Bela Lugosi. "Tim has an empathy for these underdogs," continued Landau. "He admired the fact that in the face of all this adversity, Ed Wood remained loyal to his troupe of players and was

able to get these movies made, which were so abysmal. Yet, there's something about the movies that is fun to watch. They're so bizarrely awful that it's great.

"*GLEN OR GLENDA* is a picture that doesn't know what it is. You're watching it and it suddenly becomes an informational film on cross-dressing! *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER*



Lisa Marie as Vampira, the original Mistress of Deceit.

SPACE is classically awful! *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER* is actually the only one that makes some kind of sense, in that there's a beginning, a middle and an end. It's great to get a bottle of beer, a couple of friends and some popcorn and sit down and watch them."

Burton decided to make *ED WOOD* before he started filming *MARY REILLY*, a retelling of the Jekyll and Hyde story, which he was scheduled to direct for Sony Pictures. "I had been thinking about *MARY REILLY* and working on it for awhile," said Burton. "In some ways I was pushed out of that, because the studio wanted to get it done. It was a high priority for them. I'm sure that now they're getting what they want with it." The movie recently began filming in London, with John Malkovich as Dr. Jekyll and Julia Roberts as his sexy young chambermaid.

After doing a big production like *BATMAN RETURNS*, Burton saw *ED WOOD* as a chance to do something more personal and on a smaller scale. "Tim has the choice to do whatever he wants to," said *ED WOOD*'s cinematographer Stefan Czapsky. "I think by picking something small to work on, it will show that he can be creative with the most simple and basic things."

Although the budget of *ED*



ress of the Dark, lounging on the set of her '50s Los Angeles TV movie showcase.

WOOD is considered small, at \$18 million, it is about 200 times more than Ed Wood had on any of his pictures. When asked if he was trying to work with less money in an attempt to emulate Wood, Burton laughed and said, "It's just impossible to do that in Hollywood, these days. You could be doing a movie on the scale of BATMAN, or on the scale of an Ed Wood movie, and you know what? It's pretty much the same problems. When things don't work, it doesn't matter if you have \$1 million or \$50 million. If the car doesn't start, it doesn't start.

"No matter which way you go it pretty much shakes down to the same thing. The problems of making a movie is really such a goofy thing. It's not an exact science and so many things can go wrong. Somebody was telling me that run through a computer, filmmaking is an impossibility. Too many things can go wrong. That's great, because that's what makes it kind of fun."

Working on a smaller film that is more character oriented, and lacking in special effects has allowed Burton more freedom with his shooting style. "I've gotten more away from storyboards," admitted Burton. "Obviously on a effects picture you board a

lot more. On a picture like this I find you don't need to storyboard. You're working mainly with actors, and there's no effects going on, so it's best to be more spontaneous. We did this one a little more on the spot. The approach I took was to start with the concept. Who the characters are and so forth, then just sort of do it. It's got an episodic, matter-of-fact approach. We didn't want to impose too much of a style on it. Let the people be the focus and the style will come out of that. Both Stefan and I looked at the Ed Wood movies, but we both kind of prefer to have a strong idea and then see what happens with it. We didn't try to emulate something, or have any direct references. We just chose to do it relatively matter-of-fact."

With trademark megaphone, directing PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE, with (l to r) John Ross, Max Casella as Paul Marco, Norman Alden and Brent Hinkley as Conrad Brooks.



BURTON ON WOOD

"There aren't a lot of direct recreations from his movies, just snippets. There's only one Ed Wood. I may be bad, but I'm bad in my own way. You can't be Ed Wood."

At the present time, Burton has no idea how the film will be received, but finds the characters are what makes it so endearing to him. "This group of people are so special and tragic," said Burton. "You have Tor Johnson, Vampira, Bunny Breckinridge, Ed Wood and Bela Lugosi. They're like faded royalty. There are times in history, like Paris in the '20s, when groups of artists happen to get together at the same time. I think of this as kind of the bad version of that [the surrealist movement in Paris, which included filmmaker Luis Bunuel, Salvador Dali and Andre Breton]. There's something very compelling about seeing Dracula at this stage of his life. It's a very strange feeling. It's like a weird Andy Hardy movie."

To bring this assorted cast of down-on-their-luck characters to life, Burton was quite pleased with the performances he got from a cast that included Landau, Johnny Depp and Bill Murray. "It was a fun group to work with," said Burton. "We had an ensemble of characters, who kind of float in and out. Martin has done so much, he's bringing all this experience to it. We'd be talking and Martin would say, 'Hitch did this,' and I'd think, 'Who's Hitch?' Then I'd realize, 'Oh, Alfred Hitch-

cock.' It's mind-blowing when people have such a body of work.

"Martin has done great movies. He's done weird cheesy horror movies. He's done it all. Actors and directors and everybody go through these periods of peaks and valleys. Martin was able to bring a knowledge of all sides of the character in playing Bela Lugosi. Bela was very theatrical and Martin had done all those kinds of things.

"Johnny was bringing something else to it, and it was great to be working with Johnny again. I had worked with him before [on EDWARD SCISSORHANDS], but it was fun working with a lot of new people, who I hadn't worked with before. It was a very interesting mix of people. The actors were all so good. I think we found the right spirit for the characters. The humor and the off-kilterness of them all."

Although Burton wanted to be very accurate in recreating scenes from Ed Wood's movies, he didn't want to overload the movie with them. "It's just little snippets," said Burton. "You see behind the scenes things, as they're making the movies. There isn't a lot of direct recreations from his movies. There's only one Ed Wood. I may be bad, but I'm bad in my own way. You can't be Ed Wood."

In contrast to the painstaking effort that has gone into duplicating scenes from Wood's movies, Burton noted he's glad he didn't adhere strictly to the known facts of Wood's life. "We didn't try to delve into the history of these people," explained Burton, "because there wasn't a lot you could delve into. I felt lucky that we didn't have to treat it as a realistic bio picture."

Actor Vincent D'Onofrio



Bill Murray as John Breckinridge (l) and fellow PLAN 9 aliens Allison Davies and Mickey Cottrell. Inset: Tor and Ed Wood's original actors.



and do it to death, until nobody wants to see it anymore. Then they move on to another genre they smother to death. I don't know, because I'm at a place now where I want to try to keep being interesting, and find the right thing to do. I don't want to jump on the bandwagon that everyone else wants to jump on, whatever it is."

When asked about the possibility of remaking a Hammer horror film, several of which director Richard Donner recently brought the rights for, Burton was more hesitant. "What's the point of it?" asked Burton. "I love all those films and I grew up with them, but I think the point has to be, what are you bringing to it. If it was a bad movie that had a good idea, maybe that's a good reason to do something over. Maybe somebody can bring something new to it, but why not do something different?"

You never really know, but that's part of the ethereal nature of making movies."

When Burton completes ED WOOD he hasn't decided what he'll tackle next, but admits to a desire to work on a Gothic horror film, like FRANKENSTEIN or DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE, which are currently undergoing big budget remakes. Though Burton didn't mention it, *Variety* speculated that his next project might be HOUSE OF USHER, as he awaits the completion of a script for the CAT-WOMAN movie at Warner Bros.

"I'd love to do one," enthused Burton about a gothic horror project. "They're doing them all again now. It's a kind of regeneration, which is Hollywood's tendency to find a trend

One project Burton hoped to finish soon is his documentary on Vincent Price. "It's pretty loose," said Burton. "It's the last footage of Vincent and I've got a little bit more to do on it. It's just a conversation with him in his art gallery, at East L.A. College. It's nice to see him, because he's just incredible. Vincent was really the first person I worked with from Hollywood and he turned out to be a wonderful person. He gave me a lot of hope and was a great inspiration to me. He really shaped my life when I was starting out. HOUSE OF USHER and THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM are just beautiful movies. I hope to be finished with it soon. Maybe in the Fall." □

appears as Orson Welles towards the end of ED WOOD, and there is a sequence in a carnival funhouse which might bear traces of influence from the funhouse ending in Welles' THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI. Does Burton admire Welles' work? "I never really saw CITIZEN KANE," claimed Burton. "The Welles' films sort of passed me by. I haven't seen THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI. I have seen THE THIRD MAN, and I guess I must have seen CITIZEN KANE. Yes, I'm sure I've seen CITIZEN KANE. That scene with Orson Welles was more a device of the writers. Ed was obsessed with Orson, and fancied himself as a writer-producer-director, as was Orson. The scene is just a sort of inspirational moment for Ed, when he's a little low. It had to do more with Ed Wood's connection with Orson than with mine."

Burton was still a few months away from finishing ED WOOD and claimed to have lost all objectivity about his work. "I have no conception of

what is cheesy, and what isn't," admitted Burton. "The lines to me are now completely blurred. I have no idea between good and bad anymore. That will be for others to decide."

Did that mean that Burton would be willing to take advice or give up some control of the editing to Disney honchos, such as Touchstone Pictures president David Hoberman? "Sure, I'll take suggestions from them," exclaimed Burton. "There's always that vibe of us against them, but I'll take any suggestion if it's good. If my plumber had an idea of how to make it better, I'd listen to him. It doesn't matter. You take any suggestion that is good and you feel works. If I don't agree with it, we might have a little problem. They haven't seen it yet. Right now I just have the pleasure of working on it. It's a hard thing to juggle around, because you're dealing with something that's funny and sad, and you don't know what the ultimate outcome will be. It's always shocking to see what works.

In love with angora, Johnny Depp and Sarah Jessica Parker as Dolores Fuller recreate the famous confession scene from Ed Wood's GLEN OR GLENDA.



BELA LUGOSI'S DEATH

“Ed was pretty broken up,” said actor Carl Anthony. “Bela was probably his best friend, and he had a lot of projects planned. A lot of Ed’s dreams just folded right there.”

prove.’ I told him not to worry. He went to some drapes and pulled them open. Then to a sink, washed his hands, took a towel and dried them. He had one of those sterno heaters and he took out a sterile needle and gave himself the shot. Then he washed his hands again, hanging up the towel when he was finished. When everything was perfect he closed the drapes again and said, ‘Pauly, everything okay?’ I said, ‘Beautiful. How do you feel?’ He said, ‘Pauly, I feel real good now. Let’s go back!’”

The ravaging toll Lugosi’s various addictions took on him finally proved too much. On August 16, 1956, he died, leaving his fans bereft and Ed Wood without his primary marquee-value star. It was both a professional and a personal loss for Wood, according to actor Carl Anthony, who played one of the uniformed cops in Wood’s *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*.

“Ed was pretty broken up,” said Anthony. “For two reasons: one was that Bela was probably his best friend at the time. And two, he had a lot of projects planned using Bela. A lot of Ed’s dreams just folded right there.”

Wood was one of the pall bearers at Lugosi’s funeral. But, before Lugosi died, Wood had managed to scrape some money together and shoot a bit of generic footage of Lugosi in his Dracula cape in a cemetery, as well as some shots of Lugosi picking a flower outside a small house. The footage became the basis for Wood’s *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*.

Originally titled *GRAVE-ROBBERS FROM OUTER SPACE*, the film has come to be regarded as Wood’s “best” work, the so-called Worst Film of All Time. Wood himself claimed that if one wanted to “know him,” one should watch *GLEN OR GLENDA*, but that *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* was his “pride and joy.”

Written in less than two weeks, the film is a pastiche of sci-fi and horror film clichés, filled out with Wood’s typically cautionary ramblings based upon the wave of UFO sightings of the time and anxiety about nuclear weapons.

Wood had an encyclopedic knowledge of the holdings of stock shot libraries across Hollywood. He counted on this knowledge and it often became a starting point in planning a project. “Ed wrote like decoupage,” said *PLAN 9* star Vampira. “He had some stock footage of Bela, stock footage of army tanks and \$6000 to make this movie. It’s like making a patchwork quilt, and you sew it all together. Ed never started with a master design. He grabbed what was handy, and stuck it onto something else that was available, and so it grew.”

With his little bit of money, Wood did some shooting, then shut down production to look for more backers. Wood found his primary investor in Ed Reynolds, who managed the apartment complex Wood lived in at the time. Ed Reynolds convinced the leaders of a local Baptist church to finance *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* on Wood’s promise that, with its “inevitable” profits, the Baptists and Wood would embark upon a series of Biblical epics that the



Carrying on without Bela: Wood (l) on the set of *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* with Criswell and Paul Marco (r), who witnessed Lugosi’s drug habit.

Baptists were much more interested in backing.

Actor Gregory Wolcott (*THE SUGARLAND EXPRESS*, *NORMA RAE*) was one of the few legitimate actors in *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*. He played the airplane pilot who first sights *PLAN 9*’s infamous flying saucers from his cockpit window. Wolcott was a congregant of the same Baptist church as Reynolds and knew him as a friend. “One day he came to me, excited that he had raised some money and was going to make a film starring Bela Lugosi,” recalled Wolcott. “And he wanted me to be the young leading man in the film. I said, ‘But Ed, Bela Lugosi’s dead!’ But he assured me that [Wood] was a very ingenious writer-director. Wood was going to use his chiropractor, who resembled Lugosi, to stand-in. It just didn’t sound straight to me.”

Reynolds arranged a lunch meeting between Wolcott and Wood. “I agreed to meet at a restaurant along La Cienega. Wood was a quite a charming guy. He had flamboyancy, he wore a little moustache, looked a little bit like Errol Flynn. As soon as I sat down he began a litany of telling me how great I’d be in the film, and how good the film would be. They gave me a script and I went home and read it. It was the most abysmal stuff I had ever read in my life. It had no rhyme or reason, the dialogue was childish. I didn’t want to hurt Ed Reynolds’ feelings, but I tried to encourage him to think better of what he was getting into. However, he was hell-bent to do it, and I saw that I couldn’t talk him out of it.”

Wolcott agreed to do the film as a favor to Reynolds, but never felt comfortable with his decision. “Ed Wood was very persuasive,” said Wolcott. “He had a great energy level, but that

continued on page 39

A tortured moment of self-loathing from *GLEN OR GLENDA* (1952) with Wood in the title role of a crossdresser.



ED WOOD WOOD MANIA

PLAN 9 LIVE!—THE MUSICAL

Wood's oddball legacy could wind up on Broadway.

By John Thonen

Soon a new name may be added to the pantheon of American musical greats. Taking his rightful place alongside Irving Berlin, Stephen Sondheim, and Andrew Lloyd Weber comes the one and only...Ed Wood?

Actually, Ed Wood will deserve little credit for any success *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE: THE MUSICAL* may enjoy. *Moviedom's* leading transvestite filmmaker (as far as we know) and his most (in)famous creation serve only as unlikely inspiration for the musical comedy stage show. When, and if the show becomes a mass success the credit will belong as much to outrageous coincidence and dumb luck as much as it will to any master plan. Much like Wood's own belated fame.

The show's convoluted history begins in 1983, when David Smith, a University of Utah theatre student decided to do something to enliven the University's musical theatre program. He had seen Wood's movie at a bad film festival a few years earlier and a musical comedy version of the widely accepted "worst film ever" seemed to suddenly make sense.

"I was unsure of how to approach it," recalled Smith. "Everything fell into place when I came across a reference to the film's original title [*GRAVEROBBER'S FROM OUTER SPACE*] and something just seemed to click. Within moments I was working on a song of the same name. I'm always a little hesitant to mention it, but it only took me a little over an hour to write that song. In fact, I had six of the



Guerilla theatre: Cary Miller (c) as alien commander GlenOrGlenda discusses alien invasion plans with Eros (Paul Bruening) and Tanna (Erika Gullick).

show's tunes done within three days."

Smith's original production was held outdoors and went well until it started to rain. After starting and stopping the show several times, Smith finally decided to cancel it. "It just wasn't safe for the cast to work in the rain around all those amps and microphones," recalled Smith. "I was afraid we'd kill someone." To his amazement, the audience wouldn't leave. "I've never been so stunned in my life, they just wouldn't go. So we crammed everyone under a large awning and I played my acoustic guitar to accompany the cast as they did the lines and sang the songs. It was so packed that you could barely move, but the audience seemed to love it."

Following the success of the outdoor performances, the show was moved to the stage of a local movie theatre and continued to run to sell-out audiences. Despite its success, or maybe because of it, Smith decided to

shut it down. "I knew that somewhere, there was someone who owned the rights to the film, and I certainly didn't have their permission to use the title, story or dialogue. I was afraid that any more notoriety would soon bring lawsuits."

But this was one show that just wasn't going to die. David Luby had been the lighting director during the show's indoor run in Utah. A theatre graduate of the University of Missouri at Kansas City, in 1988 Luby formed a non-profit theatrical group called the Gorilla Theatre and decided to restage Smith's *PLAN 9* to garner a lot of attention.

Luby loved the show's music, but decided to make some changes in Smith's concept of the show. "I tried to bring in more theatrical roots," said Luby. "To make it more of a cohesive show rather than just a parody of the film." Luby's biggest change was in the characters. "The show needed something to

keep the audience interest between the songs, so I made the characters even more outrageous, particularly that of the alien commander GlenOrGlenda. In David's version, the Commander was a transvestite who wore a pantsuit and was modeled after Joan Crawford, complete with *MOMMY DEAREST* coat hanger. We outfitted him in a prom dress, blonde wig and army boots. I like to think of the Commander as being the spirit of Ed Wood in our show."

Smith traveled to Kansas City to see the opening of the revived show, retitled by Luby as *THE BIG PLAN 9*. Also in the audience was Wade Williams, owner of the *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* film rights. Unknowingly, Luby had chosen to restage the show in Williams' hometown.

"We found out about Wade opening night from a local actor who had appeared in one of Wade's films," Luby recalled. "It was a little scary knowing he was out there. There were visions of lawsuits dancing through our heads."

Part way through the show, Smith managed to figure out who Williams was and get word to Luby that Williams seemed to be enjoying the show. "I just wasn't enjoying it," said Williams today. "I was loving it. This wasn't the first time someone had thought of trying to do something new with the film. Over the years I've owned it, the Second City troupe and Cheech and Chong have both contacted me about doing a new version. But no one ever had a really concrete idea of what they wanted to do, and nothing

“I’ve got to believe that Ed Wood is up in Heaven,” said rights owner Wade Williams, “lounging in his bra and panties, and getting one hell of a good laugh out of all this.”



The poster by Joel Andres for the Kansas City Fine Arts Theatre run in early 1989. The show is currently optioned for London.

ever came of it. I couldn't imagine what could be done. There is just so little there. I guess no one had ever thought of making it a musical."

Williams suggested restaging the show at the Fine Arts Theatre, a revival movie house owned by Brian and Ben Mossman, two friends and frequent business partners of his. The show was retitled **PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE: THE MUSICAL**. A few months later it reopened to rave reviews in the local press.

As the show's popularity grew, Luby's interest waned. "I want to do theatre with an edge, something rough around the edges and maybe a little dangerous in concept," explained Luby. "Wade wanted something that could be developed into a touring show, or even an off-Broadway production." Following the show's six-week Fine Arts run, Luby left the production and returned to his Gorilla Theatre.

For a time, it looked like the show might open on the West

Coast in a production featuring TV star Rob Stone (**MR. BELVEDERE**). But Stone's representatives wanted full control of the show with no money up front. "I'd like for our ideas for the show to influence future productions," said Williams. "If I can't have that then I think that David and I should at least be handsomely bought off," Williams laughed.

Williams was also approached by Scott Birkett, the show's head electrician during its Fine Arts run, who proposed taking the show on the road, hitting the college, cabaret and small theatre circuit. As a prelude, Williams allowed Birkett to restage the show under the direction of Rick Cowan.

Cowan and Birkett made more changes, considerably tightening the somewhat lackluster second act, and smoothing out the rough edges that had once intrigued Luby. "I don't want to emasculate the show, but I do want to make it more palatable for the average audience," said Birkett. "It has to

grow beyond the cult audience that the film provides it."

Birkett and Cowan also tried to better present the film's message in the show. "I think that part of the movie's charm," explained Birkett, "is that in spite of his ineptness as a filmmaker, Wood did have a sincere message about peace and understanding. We hope to emphasize those qualities so that the show is both a good-time musical and a feel-good show."

Birkett and Cowan's adaptation of the show ran two weeks. Birkett's Solarnite Productions (named for the aliens' secret weapon in the movie) began to look for bookings, but were hampered by Williams' interest in launching a production of the show in London.

During the initial Fine Arts run, a crew from the BBC had videotaped a performance in order to include excerpts in an episode of **THE INCREDIBLY STRANGE FILM SHOW**, a documentary about the films of Ed Wood. The program's producer had been so impressed with the musical he began showing the tape to friends connected with the British theatre. Interest grew and Williams was eventually contacted about staging the show in England.

The producers who bought the rights from Williams had also mounted **RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET**, a musical comedy derived from another, albeit more respected '50s science fiction film that failed both critically and financially.

The prospect of the show becoming a British hit, that might then be transplanted to Broadway, hampered Birkett and Cowan's efforts to find financial backers. The chief attraction of investing in the show would be the hope that it would grow into something far larger than some college performances. The proposed British production on a much larger

scale, eliminated one of the chief attractions of investing in Birkett and Cowan's college tour. But, after three years, the show remains unstaged in England or on tour.

Plans by Birkett and Cowan to mount the production this past spring at Chicago's Organic Theatre, starring B-movie queen Linnea Quigley fell through when a key investor pulled out. "It would have been ideal to open around the same time as Burton's film and share in some of that publicity," noted Birkett, "but the show is capable of standing without it. This is just a set back. This is the show that can't be killed."

Williams is similarly positive about the show's future. "It's all going to come full circle," he said. "The show will be an international hit and eventually it will spawn a film adaptation—a good film this time," Williams laughed. "I've got to believe that Ed Wood is up in Heaven somewhere, lounging in his bra and panties, and getting one hell of a good laugh out of this." □

Andrew Berry, Laurie Larson and Shaun Hyland on a cockpit set about as lavish as Wood's inspiration.



WOOD MANIA

HOLLYWOOD RAT RACE

A look at Wood's own book about his movie failures, soon to be published.

By Mark Carducci

Edward D. Wood Jr.'s how-to guide to success in Hollywood has got to be one of the oddest and saddest testaments to the film industry imaginable, far less for what it offers about "MAKING IT" (to punctuate the phrase Wood-style) in "HIS" tinsel town, than for what it reveals about the feverish and alcohol-fogged mind of the late cult director himself. St. Martin's Press plans to publish the book posthumously in October to cash-in on interest in Tim Burton's *ED WOOD*.

Simplistic and brash, simultaneously crudely cynical and heartbreakingly naive, *The Hollywood Rat Race* is Wood's personal, embarrassingly unadulterated (and wholly un-asked for) advice to the novice, a gothically pompous attempt by Wood to sum up his almost 20 years of running in the "RAT RACE" (!) of Hollywood.

The manuscript for the book has apparently been ripening in a filing cabinet for 28 years, and comes to us after being handed to William Obbagy, founder of the International Bela Lugosi Fan Club, by Wood himself in the 1960's. Wood apparently felt Obbagy could place it with a publisher; and finally he has, thanks no doubt to the recent upsurge of interest in all things Woodian. The book is presented exactly as Wood typed it, misspellings, typos, jaw-dropping grammar, screwball logic and all.



The book from St. Martin's Press includes Wood's advice to would-be actors, above with Francis Fuller in *GLEN OR GLENDA*.

Where to begin to assess this 150-page posthumous communication from the So-Called Worst Director of All Time? Clearly written from the gut (and, also as clearly, out of great frustration), *The Hollywood Rat Race* is the ultimate example of Wood's deep-seated need to homilize.

The book is directed largely at the would-be thespian, since acting is what Wood initially pursued upon his arrival in Los Angeles in 1948. Chapter titles include the uppity, "So You Want to Be a Star," the titillating "Sex, Hollywood and You," and the uncomfortably apt "How to Make a Cheap Picture and Fail." This last heading is part of the final portion of the work, which eventually gets

around to dealing directly with advice to the hopeful WRITER (Wood's caps) and director.

Penned in the preachy, delirious and tongue-twisting prose of his screenplay narrations, Wood's book can not be said to be of any real value as the primer it was intended to be. But as a personally drawn map of the discursive, deluded and disorganized psyche of the thwarted Wood, it is a harrowing and unique work.

A sampling of the observations to be found within are: "Aim for the STARS, and if at the end of your life you've only reached MARS remember one thing. STARS flicker in and flash out—MARS is a planet." One grasps the point Wood is trying to make here, just

barely, but throughout the book one comes upon sentence after sentence that is equally as grandiose and befuddling. It's easy to believe that as Wood typed he simply never looked back, never proofread a word.

This is how Wood describes the then-emerging broadcast medium of television: "By 1953 the 'baby' art called television had become a 'baby' no longer, but a skeleton filling out toward the giant it was to become." What, really, can one say about a sentence like that?

And this kinky revelation about "Mr. Sleazy," Wood's catch-all name for the (in Wood's experience), inevitable indie producer who preys sexually on young female acting hopefuls: "Strange as it may



Wood and (l to r) Tor Johnson, makeup artist Harry Thomas,

seem to some of you, a few of these characters will let you just lay on your back NUDE, while they put on your clothes... PANTIES, warm with the heat of your body; sweaters of an expensive and unusually furry nature, are a hot item to these characters..."

Here and there throughout the book one encounters a number of other disparaging references to crossdressers. This is fairly unexpected, because Wood was himself a transvestite, and, by all accounts, was completely unembarrassed and comfortable with this predilection. Perhaps there was an element of self-loathing in Wood regarding this after all.

The richest, most effective and fascinating portions of the book detail Wood's recollections of horror legend Bela Lugosi. Since Wood gave only one known interview regarding Bela, to Robert Cremer, author of the Lugosi bio, *The Man Behind the Cape*, these passages must count as invaluable to the understanding of the relationship between the two men.

But *The Hollywood Rat Race* truly comes into its morbid own in Wood's closing chapters on writing. Here, Wood's weirdly touching ineptitude at his own calling reveals itself in almost every dizzying line. Wood on inspiration: "...it isn't every morning you get up, sit down with the old pencil and paper and the greatest ideas in the world flow out—more so it is you will sit down and the blank



and cameraman Bill Thompson, filming NIGHT OF THE GHOULS.

sheet of paper will stare right back at you. An angry something that lays there defying every thought you might have. A white glob starching every urge into a thoughtless plan which means nothing, or little more than nothing."

Wood on tenacity: "The main idea is to keep writing. No matter what it is. Keep at it because even if your story gets worse you will be getting better. You'll sit and dream most of the time, but you must first conquer the big white glob with typewriter imprints."

Wood on dealing with the naysayers: "It's a continuing terror to me when hearing someone say about someone's work... 'Ahh, that stinks!' 'That stinks...' Yet the sayer probably couldn't ink [Wood's pun] his way out of a paper bag. YOU put it on paper. Good—bad, or indifferent. At least you had the guts to put it there..."

And guts is what Ed Wood had. He lived 12 more years after writing *The Hollywood Rat Race*; 12 more undoubtedly painful years of disintegration and decay, professionally and personally. It's reported that he wrote a spec script for TV's *THE BEVERLY HILLBILIES*. It was rejected. He also knocked out well over 50 lurid sex paperbacks, with titles like *Raped in the Grass* and *Young, Black and Gay*. By the early '70s Wood would even become the occasional director of hardcore porno loops, eerily echoing

continued on page 61

ED WOOD, CON MAN

"Ed's charisma, being jovial and gay, bothered me," said actor Gregory Wolcott. "I'd been around enough to know what was legit. He seemed like a flim-flam man."

actually bothered me. I'd been around the business enough to know what was legit and what was a con game. And Ed's charisma, his qualities of being authoritative and jovial and gay, bothered me. He seemed something of a... well, a flim-flam man."

Dr. Tom Mason, who would double for Lugosi in *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*, was a drinking buddy of Wood's, and reportedly treated Bela Lugosi for the actor's various addictions in the last years of his life.

PLAN 9's makeup artist, the low-budget veteran Harry Thomas, failed to see the resemblance between Mason and Lugosi. "I had mixed emotions about that," remembered Thomas ruefully. "I thought perhaps it would work. Mason... did his best..." Mason plays all of his scenes with a cape held across the lower two-thirds of his face, evoking a similar pose struck by Lugosi as Dracula. The intercutting of Mason and Lugosi's footage is one of *PLAN 9*'s stranger incongruities, and one fans of the film seem to savor.

PLAN 9 shot for five days in a tiny studio on Santa Monica Boulevard (called Quality Studios!) and for two additional days of silent exteriors. Wood rounded

up his usual stock company, Tor Johnson, the psychic Criswell, Vampira, Paul Marco, Conrad Brooks and cameraman Bill Thompson. But then, the Baptists made a last-minute request: they wanted those making the film to be baptized! To keep the cash coming, Wood agreed.

According to Wolcott, Wood had actually begun attending services with the Baptists as a means of currying favor. Wolcott remembered reporting for work on the film at Quality Studios. "I began looking for the address they had given me," recalled Wolcott. "I couldn't find it. Finally, I asked some store owner and he pointed down an alleyway. I walked down this musty, narrow alley to where I found this little stage ensconced behind these buildings. I mean a tiny stage. They'd put all the sets inside this one sound-stage. Most looked like an amateurish sixth grade play. I couldn't believe what I was looking at."

Wolcott had been fitted with a pilot's uniform at Western Costume, which insisted Wood pay for the rental in advance. When the time came to do his scenes, Wolcott was unable to find the set of an airplane cockpit. "I asked Ed where the cockpit was. He said, 'They're

THE VIOLENT YEARS (1956), Wood's screenplay about a gang of rich girls who don men's clothes to rob gas stations, bears his unmistakable stamp.



THE SINISTER URGE (1961), Wood's last film about a murderer whose crimes are linked to pornography.

building it.' I waited for an hour or so, waiting for them to bring a cockpit onto the sound-stage. And about an hour before the scene was to be filmed, two carpenters brought out two masonite boards. They bent them into an arch and nailed them somehow to the floor. Then they put a shower curtain behind that. They brought in, from the spaceship set, some pieces of the spaceship's radio—and that made up the cockpit! The cameraman just shook his head. It looked awful!"

Quality was so small a stage that there was barely enough room to drive a car onto a set. "People always ask me why I got into the car in *PLAN 9* from the right side, the passenger side," said Wolcott. "The camera was right against the wall and the car was against the camera, so I couldn't walk between the camera and the car!"

Wood's style of direction was reportedly brisk and uncritical—in other words, he rarely did more than one take, regardless of what might go wrong. "He gave us very little direction," said Wolcott. "He was just mainly concerned about getting it on film, getting his shots done. He just wanted to get the actors in a position



WOOD MANIA

VAMPIRA SPEAKS

An interview with Maila Nurmi, the TV horror hostess Wood made a star.

By Al Ryan
& Dan Cziraky

Ever since Ed Wood's *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* was awarded the dubious title of "Worst Film Ever Made" in Michael Medved's *The Golden Turkey Awards* in 1981, the movie has become a cult obsession with genre fans. Vampira played the recently deceased wife of co-star Bela Lugosi. She was the only one who didn't have to recite Wood's disastrous dialogue. Her screen time was brief, but the image of the wasp-waisted ghoul wafting through the film's no-budget sets has had its bizarre impact on audiences after 34 years.

Vampira was the creation of actress/model Maila Nurmi, born in Lapland, Finland, in 1921, the niece of legendary Olympic long-distance running champion Paavo "The Flying Finn" Nurmi.

Nurmi's family moved to the United States when she was a baby. After growing up in Ohio and Oregon, Nurmi moved to Los Angeles, seeking stardom. Her big break was a stint as a chorus girl on Broadway, working for [producer] Mike Todd. "I did a midnight show for Mike called 'Spook Scandals,'" said Nurmi, "a musical horror show in which I did a striptease in the dark. I had a body-stocking painted with bones, which I would remove. I would remove one breast, and throw it at the audience. It was very provocative!"

Based on her Broadway re-



Nurmi in 1951, discovered by Bernard of Hollywood in the 8mm *BEAUTY ON THE BEACH*, which featured Marilyn Monroe.

views and notices, Nurmi was discovered by producer/director Howard Hawkes (*THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD*). "I was to be the 'new' Lauren Bacall," commented Nurmi. "When I got there, they said, no, I was the new Garbo, but by then Garbo was obsolete."

On the loose in the Hollywood of the early '50s, Nurmi befriended such young talents as Marlon Brando, the late Anthony Perkins, and the late James Dean. "I did improvisations with my good friends in the streets of the *world*," she beamed. "I never studied acting formally, but learned by *doing* it."

Recalled Nurmi of her relationship with Dean, "I had an intense relationship with him, but I don't know how to define it," she said. "We knew each other inside and out. He was a mystery to most people, but not to me. We were like large children playing. There was a little

incestuous, repressed passion there, but it's indecent to come-on to your sister or brother, so it was repressed. But we had good times together. I certainly missed him when he cut out."

In 1954, Nurmi premiered in *THE VAMPIRA SHOW* on KBS-TV, channel 7, in Los Angeles. "I produced that show, and the first show they aired was from my pilot," she recalled. Nurmi was dressed in black, with a belt tightly cinched across her 17-inch waist. Her naturally pale complexion was accentuated with ghoulish makeup and impossibly long fingernails. Her blonde tresses were hidden beneath a black wig, completing a look similar to the vampire-girl in the cartoons of Charles Addams.

"*THE VAMPIRA SHOW* and *MOVIE MACABRE* were the same things," Nurmi explained. "They changed the name. The format would run old movies, with an intro, a final word, and lots of puns and vamping." After a year on KBS-TV, the show was brought over to KHJ-TV, channel 9. "I was there 13 weeks, with the same sponsor [as KBS]. It was all live, and only in Los Angeles."

Vampira became a local legend, and Nurmi made numerous personal appearances to promote the show. "Because the shows were aired live in an era before videotape, all the shows are lost, as no kinescopes were ever made of the broadcasts.

Nurmi concentrated on her acting once *MOVIE MA-*



BRIDE AND THE BEAST (1958), Wood's script of a big game hunter's wife who's carried off by a gorilla.

where they could say the lines, and say them where you could hear 'em."

Like the silent directors of a by-gone era, Wood directed *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* using a megaphone. It was just one more idiosyncrasy from a man who had more than his share. Some rolled their eyes, but Vampira found it rather sweet and poetic.

Vampira (aka Maila Nurmi) had come to Wood's attention as the horror host of channel 7 in Los Angeles, after being spotted by station management in her costume at a masquerade ball. "It was the '50s, remember, and still a very straightlaced society. Very prim and conventional. And this character was so bizarre, she was a shocker for people. The show was locally produced. I was paid \$79.00 a week, \$59.60 take home. Midnight on Saturday night, a very dead time slot. But within three weeks *Life* magazine was knocking. All hell broke loose. I had fan clubs all over the world, which I don't think has ever happened since with a local show."

Vampira's "look" was what Wood wanted and that's what he got. Originally, the script contained dialogue for her character, but Vampira refused to say the lines and asked if

“I think every woman who ever met him fell in love with him. He had the eyes of a dreamer, a little boy. He kept me at arm’s length. Extremely handsome, he was.”



Nurmi as Vampira in 1958, plugging a film. The actress accuses Cassandra Peterson, a.k.a. Elvira, of stealing her act and vowed to take legal action.

CABRE completed its run on KHJ-TV, appearing in three drive-in movies for exploitation producer Albert Zugsmith: *THE BEAT GENERATION* (1959), *THE BIG OPERATOR* (1959), and *SEX KITTENS GO TO COLLEGE* (1960). For exploitation producer Bert I. Gordon, Nurmi played a supporting role as the Hag in *THE MAGIC SWORD* (1962), with Basil Rathbone. Nurmi also did one, brief scene, early in the film, out of her heavy makeup, appearing as a beautiful enchantress.

After all these years, Nurmi is still best remembered for her brief role in *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*. Her memories of making the film are quite vivid. She recalled director Edward D. Wood Jr. as someone she never really warmed up to. “He was not my kind of person,” she confessed. “He was a gentleman, and such a gentle soul. He kept me at arm’s length, and I liked looking at him from a distance because he was *very* pretty, and I like look-

ing at beauty. Extremely handsome, he was. I think that every woman who met him fell in love with him. He had the eyes of a dreamer, of a little boy. I think every woman likes to mother a little boy. He behaved very well on the set. He worked with a megaphone, which was obsolete by then. We didn’t need one, because we were on a very small set. I don’t know who he was trying to be; I guess he needed the romance.”

Nurmi had worked with Bela Lugosi before. “He was such an Old World gentleman,” she remarked. “He was born and bred in a different age. I loved working with him. What I read about him in *Nightmare of Ecstasy* [by Rudolph Grey] sounds very different from the Bela I knew, but I guess we all have many sides to our natures. When we did *THE RED SKELTON SHOW* together in 1954—our writer for the show was Johnny Carson—at the end of the show he took my arm and walked me forward. Well, he made me feel like a *thousand* Grace Kellys.”

As for the film itself, Nurmi feels *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* was a major mistake. “I thought that *PLAN 9* was the worst thing that I have ever done to myself,” she admitted. “I felt that I had no alternative, because I was so poor, and they offered some cash money.” In fact, Nurmi was paid only \$200 for one day’s work on the film—a pittance even by 1950’s standards. “The only odd thing I can remember was, as I was walking in the cemetery in my paper dress, I was wearing wooden platforms to make myself taller, and I walked very clumsily in them—worse than the Frankenstein monster. You can clearly see that in the film, and, I was dragging along a log of paper ‘grass,’ which made it even harder to move.”

NIGHT OF THE GHOULS (1959), Wood’s follow-up to *PLAN 9*, featured Tor Johnson and Criswell in a story of phony mediums accidentally summoning the dead “for real.” Wood wanted Vampira to return for the film. “They did coach me for it, but I soon said no,” Nurmi maintained. “I thought, professional suicide *once* was quite enough...I’m already dead.” Wood used Vampira lookalike Geannie Stevens in the role of “The Black Ghost”—many sources credit the part to Nurmi to this day.”

For many years, Nurmi retired from acting and disappeared from mainstream Hollywood. In the early ’80s, Nurmi was briefly involved in a project that would have revived Vampira for KHJ-TV. Nurmi insisted that her involvement with the project ended with the casting of comedienne Cassandra Peterson. “I walked out on the project when they brought her in. I said, ‘No way!’ [Peterson] didn’t want to do the show. She said, ‘What is this, some dumb kiddie show?’ She wanted to be Ann-Margret.”

It is Nurmi’s conviction that *MOVIE MACABRE*, starring Peterson as “Elvira” on KHJ-TV was a rip-off of her Vampira character and the old shows for KBS-TV and KHJ-TV, and Nurmi eventually sued. “I started a lawsuit against her and her people, but I ran out of funds,” she explained. “I had no alternative but to stop it. They had my back against the wall, financially, so I had to stop. Now, I’m open to sue for damages, because I never sued for that. I will sue again when I feel I have the energy.”

Having become something of a recluse until recently, various rumors popped up about the ultimate fate of Nurmi/Vampira. And as *PLAN 9* has grown in cult stature over the last few years, Nurmi has noticed a resurgence in interest in Vampira. “I loved the lyrics to The Damned’s song, *Plan 9, Channel 7*,” she said. “And in the video, their Vampira was so beautiful. Vampira is not me.

continued on page 61

Checking fluid levels at Woodlawn Cemetery in 1955, after her two years as a movie hostess ended.



“Ed’s spirit was wounded,” recalled actress Valda Hansen. “He called me one night and cried right there on the phone, and said, ‘Valda, I’m sick. I can’t go on.’”



Who was that masked man? Dr. Tom Mason (inset), Wood's chiropractor, doubled for Lugosi in PLAN 9.

she might play the role mute, in an “alpha state” suitable, she reasoned, to the zombie she was playing. Wood cheerfully agreed, according to Vampira, with a “Sure baby, anything you want, we just want to see you, sweetie.”

Of her now-famous, stiff-legged perambulations across Wood's stark and fog-bound cemetery set, she recalls there wasn't all that much to doing it. “I was there, altogether, maybe five hours, two hours before lunch and maybe three hours after.”

Despite its almost uncountable technical inadequacies—the mismatched intercutting of day and night scenes, the cemetery tomb stones that topple as actors run past them, the glaringly visible strings on the wobbly flying saucers, PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE still managed to haunt the mind. Its quality of (unintentional) surrealism is a key reason. This was a movie that wasn't working, yet it didn't seem to know it wasn't working.

In PLAN 9, and in most of his other films, what Wood may have lacked in filmmaking skills, he more than made up for in tenaciousness and bald-faced conviction. No matter how inept, Wood's direction could always be counted on to display a giddy, bold and unblinking confidence, a seemingly total lack of awareness that things weren't, perhaps,

going so well.

Watching his movies, we can sense Wood's odd and undeniable personal connection to his own arcane subject matter. His febrile cinematic flailings definitely linger in the mind after watching, in ways the works of other '50s exploitation filmmakers (Bert I. Gordon, Herman Cohen, etc.) simply do not. Doing something like no one else is always a guarantee one will be noticed and remembered.

Genre critic Bill Warren, author of *Keep Watching the Skies*, offered a plausible theory as to the staggering number of technical flaws in Wood's films. “I think Wood wasn't interested in the end product at all,” said Warren. “I think he was interested in making movies. I suspect he would have been happy if he never had to complete a picture at all. If he could have just gone out and

shot the footage and nothing ever came of it, I think he would have been perfectly happy. It certainly doesn't look like he cared about the end product.”

But if Wood, on some level, didn't truly care about the finished product, his backers had to: it was their money at risk. It fell to producer Ed Reynolds to try and sell the completed PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE to a distributor. This proved to be no easy task, as Gregory Wolcott recalled, with sadness.

“Ed Reynolds went to New York to try to get a distribution deal,” recalled Wolcott. “He started at the very top, with companies like Paramount, and went all the way down. He spent three weeks, and could get no one to handle the film. Months later he was able to work out a distribution deal with a small company [DCA], but he had to pay for the release prints himself. He made 10 or 15 prints, but the lab took a lien against the film to pay for them. He also had to pay for pressbooks and one-sheets, before the company would release it.”

Reynolds and the Baptists ultimately lost their investment in PLAN 9 FROM OUTER

SPACE, and the resulting disappointment and disillusionment hit Reynolds hard.

“It made no money at all and after a short while the distributors just pulled it,” said Wolcott. “It broke Ed Reynolds' heart—I could tell he was very very depressed on account of it. About three or four months later, he died. And I think it was from a broken heart.”

Wood followed PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE with NIGHT OF THE GHOULS in 1958. It was a far more static and cliched genre film than most of Wood's efforts. In it, he seems to be trying to just tell the story, without his usual feverish flourishes. Commercially, the film fared far worse, mired in serious fiscal difficulties that saw it taken away from the producers by the lab who did its processing. It was held up for years and finally rescued from oblivion by distributor Wade Williams, who also bought the rights to PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE.

Valda Hansen, one of NIGHT OF THE GHOULS's leads, recalled that the non-release of the film crushed Wood, contributing greatly to a demoralization that progressively worsened in him throughout the '60s. Gone was the upbeat Wood the then-young starlet knew so briefly.

“In the beginning, Ed was full of enthusiasm. But after NIGHT OF THE GHOULS, Ed's spirit was wounded. He called me one night and cried right there on the telephone and said, “Valda, I'm sick. I can't go on....”

Echoing a sentiment also expressed by Vampira, Hansen characterized Wood as “a misplaced person on the earth,” a truly lost soul. “I saw the movie E.T.,” said Hansen. “And if I ever saw a human being that was an E.T., whimsical and

Lugosi's Christmas, 1955 (l to r) Dolores Fuller, Paul Marco and Lugosi with a Hollywood columnist at a party held at Marco's West Hollywood home.



WOOD MANIA

THE PLAN 9 COMPANION

Everything you wanted to know and lots more.

By Dan Scapperotti

If all that was needed to make a good movie were heart, PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE would rank up there with the best in science fiction. Unfortunately good intentions are no substitute for a good bank account and talent. The film survives today as little better than a bad joke. Here is perhaps the only example of a film that is also the blooper reel!

Filmmaker Mark Carducci, who wrote this issue's cover story on Wood, has put together the best documentary on a poor movie ever made. It has all the ingredients of a good story; pathos, tragedy and a lot of laughs. His FLYING SAUCERS

OVER HOLLYWOOD: THE PLAN 9 COMPANION is a fascinating glimpse into a world of filmmaking few get to see, though ultimately it's much ado about nothing. At 111 minutes, the tape is 32 minutes longer than the feature it documents.

FLYING SAUCERS OVER HOLLYWOOD gives us a view of back alley filmmaking where a single small sound stage in a rundown area of the city housed all the sets including a graveyard with wobbling tombstones and the cockpit of an aircraft composed of two pieces of wood and a shower curtain. Even the cast was composed of has-beens and never-weres. Vampira, one of the picture's stars, explaining Wood's cast, said, "We were the Hollywood bottom fish, bizarre Hollywood losers and that was what was available to him."

Wood's career, as documented in this video, seems to have been cursed. Much like Cassandra, Wood, a bizarre character, was driven to make films. His curse was that nobody wanted to see them.

But Carducci's documentary makes such an effective statement that you may want to give Wood's films another look. Narrator Lee Harris admits that, "Even the best of Wood's output, though made for nothing and technically imperfect, are unconventionally directed, to put it mildly."

The documentarians have not just slapped together a patchwork of film clips. They've done their homework and found most, if not all, of the survivors of the



Tor Johnson rises from the grave in Wood's PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE, arcane Hollywood movie history captured in a fascinating video documentary.

less than landmark film. Vampira, who played Lugosi's dead wife, Conrad Brooks and Paul Marco, the film's cops, Gregory Walcott, the airline pilot, all make appearances and present their side of the story.

Commentary from such genre voices as Forrest J Ackerman, Sam Raimi and Joe Dante add a '90s view of the film. Raimi and Scott Spiegel give their humorous rendition of an appearance by the 400-pound, ex-wrestler turned actor, Tor Johnson, on the Groucho Marx television show.

Clips, interviews and home movies lead us along Wood's tragic path. From his early enthusiasm to his final days as an alcoholic writing scripts for Super 8 porno films. While scenes of Wood parading around in his transvestite garb in GLEN OR GLENDA can be hilarious, Carducci and Harris provide such an insight into the man that the scenes now generate more pity than laughs.

Wood's friendship with horror star Bela Lugosi is a touching tribute to Wood's humanity. What started as a business expediency apparently ended in genuine affection for the sick and dying actor.

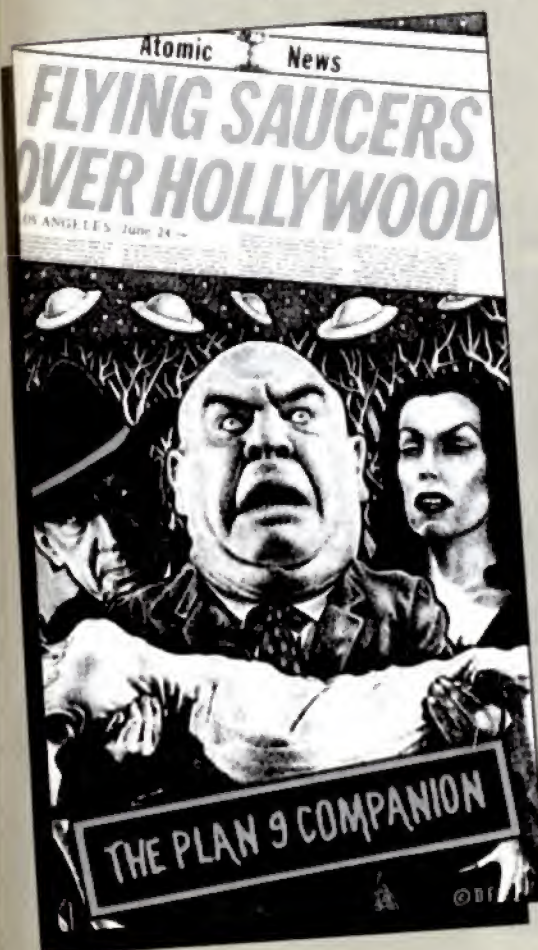
The tape is loaded with a plethora of fun facts which could only be generated by a dismal failure. From the stories about the bizarre stroke of genius to produce a film around a dead actor to the wonderful anecdotes from the actors themselves,

FLYING SAUCERS OVER HOLLYWOOD maintains a hypnotic grip on the viewer. Where else would you find a cast that got themselves baptized so that the film's backers would cough up the badly needed funds to complete the production. Even the original script had its title changed overnight because the Baptists thought GRAVE ROBBERS FROM OUTER SPACE sounded sacrilegious.

The tape debunks the myths surrounding the film's flying saucers, those "hub caps from outer space." And writer/lecturer Terry Black, author of DEAD HEAT and several episodes of TALES FROM THE CRYPT, puts everything into perspective when he reads his list of 82 wrong turns taken by the film.

Hard to find in video stores, you can order a copy, \$28.45 post-paid from Atomic Pictures, P.O. Box 15824, N. Hollywood, CA 91615. □

PLAN 9 actor Gregory Wolcott as the airline pilot hero, who accused Wood of being a movie con artist.



HUMAN MATE FOR JUNGLE BRUTES!



The one-sheet poster for one of Wood's outrageous screenplay assignments, mediocrity of amazing boldness.

wanting to go home, I think it was Ed."

In 1959-1960 Wood directed one more exploitation melodrama, *THE SINISTER URGE*. It was his last remotely legitimate effort as a director. By the early '60s, Wood's career (such as it was) was in irreversible decline.

Out of necessity, he entered his major fiction-writing phase, writing an unknown number, but scores of sex and violence paperbacks. He also went behind the camera now and again for the then-burgeoning sex film industry, which was gaining strength as the "permissive '60s" marched on. Wood maintained, as best he could, relationships with certain producers and directors, and occasionally managed to land a screenwriting assignment.

Nudie-Cutie producer/di-

rector A.C. Stevens, for whom Wood wrote *ORGY OF THE DEAD*, felt that Wood was burned out by the early '60s, and was actually relieved to no longer have the responsibility of directing. Stevens would offer writing work to Wood whenever he was able to.

"I was a soft touch for Eddie," said Stevens. "I liked him. Even when I had nothing and I was between pictures, I always tried to find something for him, a trailer, or the copy for a press-book. Eddie would always ask for a specific amount, like 'I need \$38.19.' That was the phone bill, you see. He was fighting for his life. He liked the aura of show business and kept his hand in any way he could."

Wood's drinking, Stevens felt, was the major cause of Wood's dramatic deterioration and early demise. "He tried

ED WOOD, ALCOHOLIC

"He'd get drunk on the first drink," said nudie director A.C. Stevens. "And once he started he couldn't stop. He realized what was happening. He was an intelligent man."

very hard to stop," said Stevens. "He wanted to get cured. He tried, but couldn't. He'd get drunk on the first drink. And once he started, he couldn't stop. He realized what was happening to him, he was an intelligent man. But that craving for liquor became his master. It controlled him, and that's how he died."

Rudolph Grey's biography of Wood chronicles this last, terrible phase of Wood's life in almost too-ghoulish detail. Wood and his wife Kathy were forced to move repeatedly, each time into even more impoverished environs. Many friends kept the Woods going during those last years, sometimes with handouts of money, at other times with "care packages" of food. One of these was actor Conrad Brooks.

Brooks knew Wood from almost the time Wood arrived in Hollywood and appeared in small roles in most of his films. Watching Wood's downward slide wasn't easy for him.

"He was always drunk," said Brooks. "He was out of it. He was talking about doing a movie. He said, 'I've got a guy interested in financing me,' but I knew that was just one of his wild stories. He'd really hit

rock bottom."

Wood died soon after, evicted from his \$30.00-a-month apartment on Yucca Street, living with the actor Peter Coe, along with Kathy and his pet dogs. Wood's ashes were scattered at sea. In a final ignominy, *Variety*, the trade paper of his industry, failed to run his obituary.

The slow and steady emergence of Wood's notoriety over the last decade and a half is a phenomenon in itself, aided and abetted by the Medved brothers' book, *The Golden Turkey Awards*. In it, *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* was voted Worst Film of All Time by readers of the Medved's previous book, *The 50 Worst Films of All Time*. Wood himself was voted Worst Director of All Time.

Perhaps author Bill Warren summed Wood up best. "Ed Wood was, bless his heart, an auteur if ever there was one. You'll never mistake a bad movie made by anybody else for one made by Ed Wood. There are certain films we just can't stop talking about. They touch us in some way. And, for some reason, we just can't stop talking about *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*, or Ed Wood." □

Reduced to writing scripts for nudies for the money, Criswell starred in *ORGY OF THE DEAD* (1966) Wood's graveyard monster-fest with strippers.



ED WOOD WOOD MANIA

PLAN 10 FROM OUTER SPACE

Crashed in court, cashing in on the Ed Wood craze.

By Max Adams

PLAN 10 FROM OUTER SPACE is not based on or a sequel to PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE, nor is it sponsored by, endorsed by, or otherwise affiliated with Ed Wood Jr. That's the legal disclaimer. But the science fiction comedy, written and directed by Trent Harris, is cashing in on Wood's reputation, this time with real cardboard sets. Filmed in Salt Lake City, the low-budget effort stars Karen Black and takes an irreverent look at sex, science, ritual and religion...and, more specifically, the Mormon religion.

When Kansas City film entrepreneur Wade Williams, who owns the film rights to PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE, got wind of a PLAN 10, he threatened the production with legal action. Harris said Williams asked for five percent ownership of the film for rights to use the PLAN 10 title. Harris balked and instead filed suit against Williams in Utah Federal District Court last December, asking for a declaratory judgment whether Williams had the right to sue based on the title alone.

Williams declined comment on the legal proceedings and referred questions to attorney Mike Martinez of Stinson, Mag and Fizzell. Martinez has filed for dismissal of PLAN 10's suit and is seeking an out-of-court settlement. Martinez affirmed Williams' ownership rights to Wood's film as "strong and cor-

rect," based on copyrights made of the movie and its screenplay. Martinez declined to comment on how Williams obtained those rights. Harris noted that if he loses in court, he'll change the title of his film, but the battle is going to cost Williams a great deal of money. Martinez countered by saying that a title change won't end the matter, hinting at further legal action.

With PLAN 10's emphasis



on weird Masonic ritual combined with wild musical composition, Williams may have trouble making a case of artistic theft. PLAN 10 FROM OUTER SPACE could best be described as THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW meets the Mormons. Gyll Huff, a Salt Lake performance artist, dons orange, crescent spears of hair reminiscent of Bozo the Clown, and belts out the film's theme



Karen Black stars in the non-sequel, along with impressive cardboard sets by David Brothers. Left: Black's Beeman henchman, costume designed by Chris Hanson. But use of the title has landed the filmmakers in legal limbo.

song in a nightclub suspected of harboring aliens from outer space. Karen Black, hair streaming in the vortex of the void, sings "If You Could Hie to Kolab" in her hauntingly melodic voice.

Karen Black plays Nehor, the operatic alien queen from Planet Kolab (in Mormon doctrine, the planet where God lives), who travels the universe in a cast iron space ship manned by humanoid figures with single eyes and beehive heads (beeman costumes were designed by Salt Lake local Chris Hanson). Nehor is still carrying a grudge, a century after playing 28th wife to polygamist Joseph Smith, and plans to take over Salt Lake City, and the world.

Harris, after working in Los Angeles for a decade, came home to make the film in Salt Lake City. "After about ten years spinning my wheels in Los Angeles, watching film deals fall through, I decided to come back to Utah and put a movie together I could make for a nickel," said Harris. The film was brought in

for a reported \$60,000.

Harris teamed up with Walter Hart, who has worked in special effects production on films like PREDATOR 2 and in TV on STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION. Sans distribution deals or studio backing, the pair set up a limited partnership with Hart pulling in cash investors and Harris pulling in equipment and manpower. Nobody working on the film pulled a paycheck.

While the whole affair reeks of camp, unlike the real Ed Wood, the film doesn't look hokey. Hart and Harris credit David Brothers and Joe Stetitch, two Salt Lake City set designers who miraculously created believable space ship interiors using little more than \$300 worth of cardboard, paste and paint.

With special effects from STAR TREK supplier Image G still to come, Harris plans to have a completed film ready this fall to show distributors around the time Tim Burton's ED WOOD film makes PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE a household name. □

STARGATE

MGM challenges Paramount's STAR TREK at the boxoffice.

By Tim Prokop

Despite its science fiction theme, STARGATE is a film which harkens back to the golden era of studio filmmaking, when movies were made with thousands of extras on the most extravagant sets that could be created. The sets for STARGATE were so extensive that the 65,000-square-foot Long Beach hangar, which once housed the Spruce Goose, was converted into the principal sound stage for the production. Over 16,000 extras appear in the film, and if this isn't epic enough for you—the story spans ten thousand years and millions of light years.

The project has its origins in a discussion between Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin when they met on UNIVERSAL SOLDIER, which Emmerich directed and Devlin scripted. For over ten years Emmerich had wanted to make an epic science fiction project from an original concept. He became intrigued when he learned that Devlin had a large-scale science fiction concept of his own. The pair discussed their ideas, combined aspects of both projects and STARGATE was born. Emmerich and Devlin then collaborated on the screenplay, which seems almost deliberately designed to scare the pants off budget conscious development



Kurt Russell pocketed \$7 million for playing tough-minded military man Jack O'Neill, head of a group of interstellar space explorers.

executives. Conventional wisdom warns writers against using phrases like "thousands of slaves," but when Emmerich and Devlin wanted thousands, that's exactly what they wrote.

Given this fact, it's hardly surprising that STARGATE had a long development period. Production designer Holger Gross and Academy Award-winning visual effects supervisor Kit West (RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK) who had both worked with Emmerich on UNIVERSAL SOLDIER, were both brought onto STARGATE in late 1992, over 10 months be-

fore shooting finally commenced.

"There were times when we wondered if it would ever get made," said West, "because the script called for unbelievably large sets, huge crowd scenes and a return to the old Cecil B. DeMille style of filmmaking. So we had to find ways and means to hold the film within a reasonable budget. My involvement right from the beginning was to try and decide where we would use digital technology for the effects and where we could use older, less expensive techniques."

Remarkably, the \$55 million epic (originally budgeted at \$42 million) was completed without a U.S. distributor. The project was financed by Canal

Plus, the French pay-TV giant, who were so confident in STARGATE that they gambled a major U.S. distributor would eventually become interested. The gamble paid off in March, when MGM/UA purchased the U.S. rights and chose a November release date to avoid dropping it among this summer's blockbusters at the last minute.

STARGATE begins in ancient Egypt, when a large, metallic ring is buried by a cadre of slaves. The ring is unearthed 9,000 years later by an archaeological expedition and claimed by the military who transport it to the United States



Russell's band on Ngada, a desert planet with a cast of "thousands."

where scientists vainly try to decipher its meaning.

The artifact remains a mystery for 90 years, until the runes that adorn its surface are finally deciphered by brilliant Egyptologist Daniel Jackson (James Spader). When Jackson learns that the ring is actually a dimensional gate that will open a door to a distant planet, a small group of scientists and army personnel are selected to make the potentially hazardous crossing. The group is led by Colonel Jack O'Neil, a tough-minded military man played by Kurt Russell, who pocketed \$7 million for the role.

Once the stargate is activated the group enter the portal, disappearing one by one into the brilliant light that emanates from its surface. After a thrill-a-second journey created by the digital effects artists at Kleiser-Walczak they land with a resounding thump in the city of Ngada, on a planet which bears more than a passing resemblance to ancient Egypt.

The population work as slaves, brutalized by overlords that at first appear to be the incarnation of the very Gods that the Egyptians worshiped—Ra, Anubis and a cadre of Houris with seemingly superhuman powers. While Ra keeps a God-like distance from the goings on in Ngada, Anubis, played by



Divide and conquer: MGM plans to open **STARGATE** in November, the month Paramount opens its hotly anticipated franchise **STAR TREK: GENERATIONS**.

THE CRYING GAME's Jaye Davidson, takes an active and sometimes lethal interest in his human underlings.

Stranded on the alien planet, Jackson and O'Neil soon discover that the God-like powers of the rulers stem from superior technology and, in the finest heroic tradition, lead the masses in a revolt against their enslavers. The rousing climax, showing thousands upon thousands of slaves rising against their oppressors, is reminiscent of **LAWRENCE OF ARABIA**, a film MGM hopes **STARGATE** will emulate at the box-office.

There's little doubt that **STARGATE** has been strongly influenced by the epic films of the past, as well as more recent successes such as **STAR WARS**. Like **STAR WARS** there are deaths, but virtually no blood—the Houris use weapons that project sound waves, a deliberate attempt to get away from the animated laser blasts which have become part and parcel of most science fiction films.

In addition to the gigantic sets which filled the 150-foot-tall Spruce Goose dome, Gross also created extensive exterior sets which were filmed on location near Yuma, Arizona,

at a site which conveniently doubles for both Egypt and the alien planet. While undoubtedly authentic, the desert location proved particularly challenging for the cast, crew and extras. Sunscreen and holstered water bottles were made standard equipment as temperatures soared over 120 degrees while the production was shooting. Production assistants moved through the sets repeatedly filling empty water bottles from 10-gallon containers. Over 60,000 gallons of water were drunk each day, as well as thousands of cans of soft drink.

In addition to the heat, Spader and Russell were drenched with rain, immersed in smoke, and placed in the center of one

of the largest sandstorms ever created during the filming of **STARGATE**. The actors took the travails in their stride, without any of the histrionics West has become familiar with. "I've had actors who, when you put them in rain, sand or smoke, all they do is bitch, bitch, bitch," said West. "Kurt and James were terrific, not a single complaint out of either of them. They did their job without any moaning or groaning, which helps make everyone else's job a lot easier."

The task of transforming Gross's exterior sets into an entire city was achieved through a collaborative effort between West and digital effects supervisor Jeffery Okun (**THE LAST STARFIGHTER**, **DIE HARD 2**). West placed a 120-foot-long miniature on a raised platform which was positioned near the camera to extend the sets through forced perspective. Okun took the illusion still further by digitally adding buildings from photographs to transform Ngada into a thriving metropolis.

"In terms of visual effects, the only time it's a good visual effect is when you can't spot it for what it is," said Okun. "Almost half of our work on this film will be things that people will never imagine are visual effects, such as enlarging the city and sticking pyramids out in the desert. There's a shortage of pyramids in Arizona, so we added them digitally."

Another effect that is likely to go unnoticed are the digital people that Okun added to many scenes in the film. Even thousands of extras weren't



Queen of Outer Space: **THE CRYING GAME**'s Jaye Davidson stars as Ra, the androgynous ruler of Ngada.

enough for Emmerich so Okun, cut, pasted and manipulated until there were sometimes as many as 40,000 individuals in a single shot.

In addition to effects such as these, Okun supervised the spectacular journey through the stargate, the aircraft and weapons of the Houris, and the transformations that occur when Ra and his cadre remove their highly stylized armour.

The unique look for the "Gods" and the strange life-forms that the party encounter on the alien planet were designed and created by Patrick Tautopoulus (**DRACULA**, **SUPER MARIO BROTHERS**, **DEMOLITION MAN**). As on all of his previous projects Tautopoulus was originally hired to work with the production designer and provide conceptual drawings for some of the sets.

"It's funny how it works out because I always seem to start in the Art Department and end up on creatures once people see my work," said Tautopoulus. "The first time I met Roland he described the look he was after for the Gods and we talked about it for an hour. Then I went and did some conceptual sketches for Ra, Anubis and Osiris. Roland loved them and we just went for it." □

Davidson with James Spader as Egyptologist Daniel Jackson, who deciphers ancient hieroglyphics to open the **STARGATE** to Ngada, the instigators of civilization on Earth.



ALIEN NATION:

Fox revives its cancelled series as a TV

By Douglas Eby

ALIEN NATION: DARK HORIZON, a two-hour TV movie airing on the Fox network in September, revives the popular and acclaimed 1989-90 Fox series which developed a cult following, then moves the story forward into new territory.

One of the qualities that made the series so rewarding was its rich blend of science fiction and humor in approaching devastating social problems of a very real contemporary Earth. That is still very much the purpose of the creative team, most of whom passionately wanted to return to the project, both to resolve the show's cliffhanger final episode and to develop its premise further.

Executives responsible for greenlighting and producing the new ALIEN NATION story are all science fiction enthusiasts. Lucie Salhany, head of the Fox network, was responsible for initiating STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION when she was at Paramount. Producer Kevin Burns, who identified himself as a fan of science fiction, fantasy, and horror, noted

Susan Appling (Mrs. Ken Johnson), as the priestess who marries Albert Einstein and May O'Naise at the end.



“You see the alien technology that enslaved the newcomers on their world,” said producer Kevin Burns. “That’s what makes this a movie event.”



Nina Foch as Burak, the cunning, imperious commander of the newcomer's slaveship in ALIEN NATION: DARK HORIZON, a September movie on Fox TV.

that Salhany is “somebody who gets it in terms of the genre—she knows it’s very viewer intensive and builds loyalty.”

After moving over to Fox Salhany called Steve Bell, a veteran broadcast executive and former president of network production at Fox, to help create Foxstar Productions in July 1993. A letter urging Fox to consider producing a new ALIEN NATION movie from the president of Viewers For Quality Television, a group advocating excellence and artistic freedom (also supportive lately of NYPD BLUE against a threatened sponsor boycott), prompted the TV movie revival by FoxStar.

Burns and Bell were impressed with the original pilot for ALIEN NATION, and noted

how the show has gained fan support. “The fan community was very upset when the series was cancelled abruptly,” said Burns.

Their challenge was to bring ALIEN NATION back as a TV movie, but still satisfy fans of the cancelled series. “Fortunately, we found there were two scripts by the original writers, one being a resolution to the story,” said Burns.

Writers Andy Schneider and Diane Frolov, currently Emmy Award-winning writers and executive producers for NORTHERN EXPOSURE, were so attached to ALIEN NATION they added to their CBS contracts a provision allowing them to work on an ALIEN NATION movie if one came along. Most of the other members of the se-

ries’ creative team, including its original stars and director Kenneth Johnson, also returned to work on the movie continuation.

Foxstar hired Schneider and Frolov to write a new, feature-quality script. “We told them not to hold back,” said Burns. “They loved it. It’s still a TV movie, but we wanted to do it right, especially since audiences now have become so savvy. Since the series went off the air, look at what’s been on: SEAQUEST, THE NEXT GENERATION, BABYLON 5, DEEP SPACE NINE.”

With a considerably higher budget than any of the series episodes, the TV movie takes you inside the alien slaveship that brings the newcomers to Earth, and depicts their homeworld. “You see some of the alien technology and what their world was like before they came to earth and tried to become suburbanites,” said Burns. “That’s what’s going to make this a movie event, and make people watch.”

Besides developing the original series, executive producer and director Kenneth Johnson has credits that include THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN, THE BIONIC WOMAN, THE INCREDIBLE HULK, V, SHORT CIRCUIT II and SHERLOCK HOLMES RETURNS. Johnson said he was shocked when the series was cancelled.

“It was rather like hearing a young friend had been killed in an auto accident—someone that had a lot of potential and promise,” said Johnson. “It was a very frustrating experience for all of us. We felt it was very unfinished and had a lot of life left in it.” Johnson said he found the TV movie to be “one of those rare cases where you can go home again.”

DARK HORIZON

movie and resolves its cliffhanger ending.

Writer and producer Andrew Schneider explained why he and his writing partner Diane Frolov feel so engaged with the material, which he compares to his hit *NORTHERN EXPOSURE*. "Science fiction and fantasy, by its nature, has a smaller audience, though a very dedicated one," said Schneider. "But I think the two shows are similar in that you can have a lot of humor, and you can deal with the big themes, the important themes of human existence. We've been able to write intelligently and that's important to us. We have to assume our audience is smart."

Besides designing the look of the alien ship and home-world, production designer Brenton Swift sought to match the L.A. sets of the original series. "But everything else was go for it," said Swift, "because in the series they didn't have any money and everything was just flats and smoke."

Special effects makeup, as for the TV series, was developed by Rick Stratton, a partner with Eric Allard in All Effects Company. One of Stratton's real pleasures was creating a new

animatronic baby, about six months old, which can open its eyes, smile and frown, under the control of one operator.

"The technology we developed for *NINJA TURTLES III* is a hand controller that allows one puppeteer to control 32 axes of movement," said Stratton. "Our concept is, you don't play the piano with your face—you have so much more control in your hands and wrists. "Just about any kind of creature you could come up with we could control. We're hoping to even control virtual creatures—that will be the next step."

As for the alien makeup in the series, and now this film, Stratton noted all the head pieces are custom molded to each actor, and that they do get very hot—sometimes they blew air from a hairdrier, set on cool, into the ear holes."

Scott Patterson, who portrays Ahpossno, the elite Overseer assigned to return to Earth to retrieve the Tenctonese newcomers, noted he could have done without the makeup. "It would be an interesting way to go," he said. "I don't know if it would be as believable, but it's not like when the head comes on, with all the makeup, all of a



Scott Patterson as Ahpossno, the elite Overseer dispatched to Earth to retrieve the Tenctonese newcomers, with Terri Treas as returning character Cathy Frankel, makeup by Rick Stratton of All Effects. Below Right: Filming the TV movie at Vasquez Rocks. Below: Ahpossno's mothership shuttle.



ALIEN NATION:

THE ORIGINAL SERIES

The thought-provoking show was better than the movie that spawned it.

By Douglas Eby

ALIEN NATION ran on the Fox network for one season in 1989-1990 and garnered some critical raves prior to cancellation. When asked to do the series, director Kenneth Johnson reviewed the 1988 Fox movie for inspiration and struck by a scene where alien newcomer George, played by Mandy Patinkin, gets dropped off at his house, and his family is just visible way off in the background. At the time, Fox first talked about making the series a "LETHAL WEAPON with aliens," according to Johnson, who thought the real story lay with the people in that house—what it was like to be living in suburbia, trying to assimilate, as non-alien minorities do.

In developing the pilot and series, Johnson said he tried to "raise our consciousness by permitting the message to come through naturally rather than blatantly driving it into the viewer's mind."

Johnson recalled that when the series first aired, he got a let-



The celebrated "Real Men" episode as newcomer cop George Francisco (Eric Pierpoint) gives birth, comforted by partner Matthew Sikes (Gary Graham).

ter from a black doctor in Detroit, who wrote "When I saw this program coming up I thought what do we need another show about aliens for—why don't they do one about the black experience. And then I saw it and realized it was about the black experience." Johnson noted how the New York Board of Jewish Education used episodes as teaching tools for classes on discrimination and prejudice.

Writer Andrew Schneider pointed out how "the series was able to deal with all the major human issues: sex, death, religion and the aspects of those issues we take for granted, or the assumptions we make. It was always great to turn preconceptions on their heads...to explore all sorts of fundamentals of our own psyches and civilization through examining this alien culture."

One of the more celebrated episodes, "Real Men," was described by the *Washington Times* as "a fantasy conjured up by Gloria Steinem to teach men about womb envy." Noted Schneider, "When the aliens give birth, the men end up carrying the baby for part of the time, so we're able to deal with the whole issue of masculinity and femininity."

ALIEN NATION was one of the few Fox series to be fully endorsed by Viewers for Quality Television. Since the series was suddenly pulled off the air, it has continued to develop a sizable following, and has inspired four Pocket Book novelizations. □

sudden there's a transformation."

Patterson's research for the role included reading biographies of world leaders, including one of history's darkest figures. "I chose Stalin because he was incredibly arrogant, a stupid human being, but he was feared," said Patterson. "He was also a very patient man, and so fond of children. But he's the ultimate monster because he's so passionate." Patterson noted that one of the key dramatic elements that provided a hook for developing the character of Ah-possno was the concept of freedom. "It's a very foreign concept," said Patterson of the aliens. "Where I'm from, freedom is allowing people to stay alive—it's a huge concentration camp in the sky."

Terri Treas returns to the character Cathy Frankel, and said that portraying an alien again was a gratifying experience. "I thought it would be very interesting to play a culture that we got to make up as we went along," said the actress. "And it has been. I think that's why the whole cast is back. We have a wonderful executive producer in Kenny Johnson, who lets us participate in the recreation of the culture and the mythology and language."

Treas characterized the makeup as difficult—"you never get used to it"—but also termed it an aid: "I think it really helps in playing the character. The character and the makeup complement each other very well. But with a piece of rubber on your head, as a woman, you have to keep your face still, you can't have a lot of muscular movement, which means you have to curtail a lot of normal mannerisms—no raised eyebrows, or scrunching or frowning. It looks great on the men."

As part of their research the actors read a lot about slavery and oppressed people, and engaged in an experience of "street theatre" proposed by Johnson. "Kenny even had us wear the heads and go to downtown Los Angeles, to get the feel of being different and stared at," said Treas. "It was amazing. One lady started screaming that we shouldn't do that in public. It was really

continued on page 61

The TV cast, Graham and Pierpoint with the Franciscos: Buck (Sean Six), Cathy (Terri Treas), Emily (Lauren Woodland), Susan (Michelle Scarabelli).





DARK HORIZON

EFFECTS

Alien designs by Brenton Swift and Digital Magic.

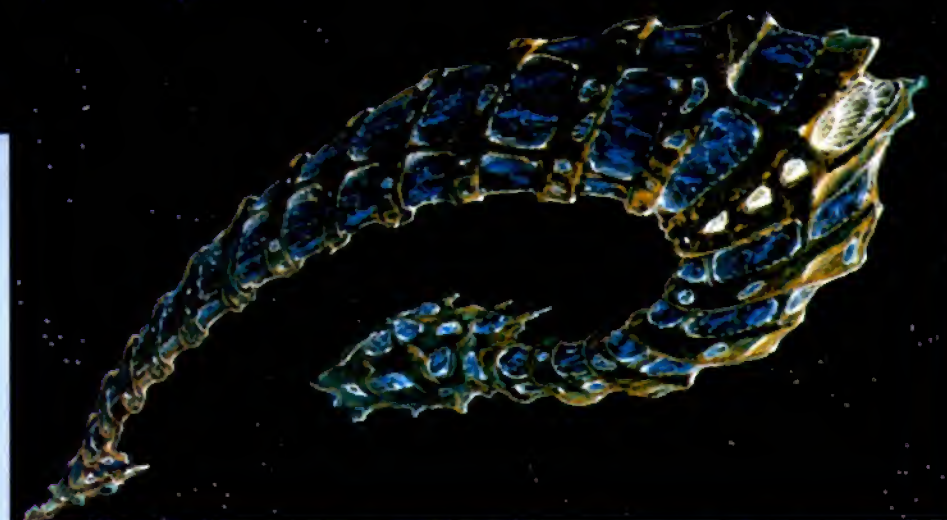
By Douglas Eby

Model construction, motion control photography, matte painting, animation and compositing for DARK HORIZON were all handled by the full service digital visual effects and post-production studio Digital Magic. Noted CEO and creative director Rich Thorne, "We faced a number of creative problems with this show. The design has a very organic feel to it. The artistry is in that look, a look that's hard to pin down, one we haven't seen before."

Digital Magic has also been responsible for work on THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN, VIPER, BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA and

EVOLVER. For DARK HORIZON, Digital Magic used matte paintings and models to create the Nebula Cruiser mothership, a snakelike structure one quarter mile across and 50 miles long, capable of carrying thousands of smaller ships inside, on landing pods.

One of the main production design criteria that affected model lighting decisions was the decision to shoot outer space scenes more realistically. "It's high-key, with minimal fill, the way we feel ships would look in the outer reaches of the solar system," said Foxstar visual effects supervisor Bill Millar. "We're going for a darker, more somber look and a more organic feeling."



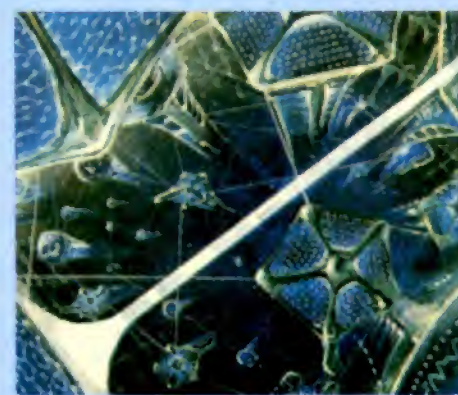
Digital Magic's model of the Nebula Cruiser mothership, 50 miles long, with the capability of carrying thousands of smaller ships. Inset: An early concept.

Production designer Brenton Swift pointed out, "It's a lot easier and cheaper to do straight lines, but we tried to stay away from that and tried to find something that people hadn't seen before."

Using backlighting and backcrossing highlights on the miniatures when shooting on the motion-control stage helped portray the evil nature of the ships, according to Millar. Another design approach has been the use of an old '60s poster technique, effectively updated. "We've been micro-detailing the ship surfaces with fluorescent paint and materials, and including ultraviolet lighting in the sources, rather than hardwiring with conventional lights or fiber optics," said Millar.

"We also use some retro-reflective materials."

Millar pointed out one of the key values of using the sophisticated digital facilities of Digital Magic, "Even though our initial release in the U.S. is going to be on television, we're protecting all the effects for a possible future film release. All the effects



Smith's production design concept of the fluorescent interior of the cargo bay of the Nebula Cruiser.

Concepts of the interior of the Nebula Cruiser by production designer Brenton Smith, "something people hadn't seen."



have been composited in the DI digital domain, so we have the ability to write back to a first generation film negative at a later date."

Thorne was enthusiastic about the opportunity to work on the new ALIEN NATION. "The expectations for quality are at feature level," he said. "When you have a challenge like that it's more enjoyable." □

DELLAMORTE DELLAMORE

Italian fumetti sensation Dylan Dog gets a filmic dry run.

By Alan Jones

When is a zombie movie not a zombie movie? When you call the living dead "Returners," when you add healthy doses of surrealism and when you base your script on a novel by the hottest name in Italian publishing today. Michele Soavi's *DELLAMORTE DELLA-MORE* is an adaptation of the Tiziano Sclavi book in which the legendary *Dylan Dog* comic strip character was born as Francesco Dellamorte Dellamore, gravedigger and caretaker of a cemetery in the mythical province of Buffalora. In a canny piece of casting *DELLAMORTE DELLA-MORE* (roughly translated as "OF DEATH OF LOVE," but no official English title exists yet), stars Rupert Everett, acknowledged by Sclavi as the best visual inspiration for the look of Dylan Dog, in the best-selling comic.

This cross-cultural blurring of film reality with comic-strip fantasy has meant masses of publicity for the movie in Italy, but it has become something of a millstone around Soavi's neck. He moaned, "Will *Dylan Dog* fans like Rupert playing



A "Returner," half zombie/half plant in director Michele Soavi's film of the Tiziano Sclavi book that inspired the *Dylan Dog* comic.

the early genesis of their hero as an impotent graveyard guardian? Or will they feel cheated because we are all trading on his look? The pressure of audience expectation on the home-front is an enormous weight on my shoulders. I must wink at the people who know *Dylan Dog*, while making a separate entertainment with meaning outside that universe. I only hope I can pull it off while re-

taining the same basic mood and philosophy."

DELLAMORTE DELLA-MORE is the first project from Audifilm, a company formed by Soavi, screenwriter Gianni Romoli (who penned *THE DEVIL'S DAUGHTER/THE SECT* for Soavi), and their mutual friend Tilde Corsi, Bernardo Bertolucci's longtime publicist. "I was fed up directing movies for Dario Argento and not getting the full recognition for it!" explained Soavi. "We knew producing in the current climate was a risk, and none of us had ever done it before, but we wanted to do something away from the Cecchi Gori-type monopolies that had stifled the Italian Film industry for so long."

The talented triumvirate couldn't have chosen to option a more unusual book than the precursor to *Dylan Dog*, telling the strange tale of a graveyard watchman and his quest to stop the dead from invading the world of the living. When a mysterious epidemic causes all the cadavers in his cemetery to come to life, laconic Francesco must shoot and rebury them before they contaminate the local population. But when he falls

“Audience expectation is an enormous weight,” said director Michele Soavi. “I must wink at the people who know Dylan Dog and make it meaningful outside that universe.”

hopelessly in love with a beautiful young girl, whom he kills by mistake, just what the differences are between being alive and dead become chillingly confused in his romantically damaged brain.

“Francesco fantasizes perfect love with an ethereal being,” explained Soavi. “Unfortunately, the exquisite creature of his dreams turns out to be a gorgeous ghoul. The entire movie is a metaphor for life; a coming-of-age saga told in fairy tale horror terms. It’s an ironic fantasy more than blood and guts.”

Soavi had actually once turned down Scavi’s book as a film project before teaming up with Romoli and Corsi, who was turned on to the book by her son. Recalled Soavi, “I was presenting THE CHURCH at the 1989 Dylan Dog Horror Fest and I called Scavi, whom I’d met briefly before, to congratulate him on his comic book success. As he knew and liked my work, I asked him if he had something he thought I could direct. One of the three comics he offered me was *Dellamorte*

Dellamore, which he’d written eight years earlier. I read it and thought it was boring. I didn’t get it. I just didn’t understand the humor, the self-mocking tone, the whole spirit of the piece.

A cut-down version was published as a book in 1991 to cash in on its *Dylan Dog* association. When Soavi read it again on Corsi’s recommendation, he now found it, “darker, tighter and much more focused. I began to see it as a movie I might like to direct.”

Co-producer and scripter Gianni Romoli, however, thought the principal character, “was too bitter, too negative and without any hope whatsoever. Francesco was so used to death it was his normal way of life. Audiences would have to slit their wrists watching a literal version of the book. I wrote five drafts of the script altogether, making the story less and less nihilistic, necrophiliac and pessimistic each time.”

Noted Romoli, writer of the top-rated fairy tale miniseries FANTAGHIRO for director Lamberto Bava and co-writer of

Anna Falchi returns from the dead in one of her three incarnations as “She.”
Below: Falchi with Dylan Dog model Rupert Everett as gravedigger Francesco Dellamorte Dellamore, surrounded by the fateful lights of Ignis Fatuus.





The Dylan Dog comics are an Italian publishing sensation, selling a million copies a month, soon to debut in the U.S.

FUMETTI INSPIRATION

By Alan Jones

"DYLAN DOG is to the '90s what Dario Argento was to the '70s," screamed a Roman headline recently. The newspaper was commenting on what has become a cultural sensation among Italian youth and an unprecedented phenomenon in European publishing circles. Not even allying *Dylan Dog* to its arguable American equivalent, *THE SIMPSONS* or *BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD*, can do justice to the best-kept secret in the Italian cult world today. Reading the *Dylan Dog* comic (dubbed *fumetti*, translated as smoke, the shape of the bubble in which the words appear), and spotting what horror film homages reclusive creator Tiziano Scavi has put in to the "Investigator of Nightmares" latest chilling quest has become the hippest street-bred pastime.

Since his comic book debut in 1986, the handsome Hercule Poirot of cool splatter (named after Welsh playwright Dylan Thomas, together with his wisecracking sidekick (who is called, looks and acts like Groucho Marx), have been selling around a million copies a month, not including regular reprints of back issues! In every 100-page graphic novel adven-

ture the "Nightmare Detective" sleuths around London, from his base at 7 Craven Road, encountering ghouls, monsters, George Romero's zombies, Chucky, the *CHILD'S PLAY* doll and other recognizable celluloid creations in the name of justice. A cross between a benign Freddy Krueger and a handsome Sherlock Holmes, the *Dylan Dog* character may look rather familiar too. A dead ringer for actor Rupert Everett, perhaps? No coincidence. When Scavi was first asked by comic strip illustrators whom the figment of his imagination most resembled, he quickly said the star of *ANOTHER COUNTRY*, and *THE COMFORT OF STRANGERS*.

The Everett connection is the main reason why the \$1.60 paperback has achieved what no other publication ever has on these spaghetti shores awash with many other sexually violent, blood-soaked comic strips: a devoted female readership alongside the hardcore male one. Milan-based Sergio Bonelli is the publishing brains behind *Dylan Dog* and he's responsible for aggressively targeting the feminine market as well as licensing the staggering amount of tie-in merchandise available from T-shirts and ac-

tion figures to watches and mirrors (mirrors being the entrance to the nightmare netherworld) Bonelli also sponsors the Dylan Dog Horror Fest, the world's largest genre film festival, which usually takes place every May in Milan. It's the only advertising Bonelli ever has to do, and entrance is free to anyone clutching the latest edition of *Dylan Dog*.

But why hasn't *Dylan Dog* made it to the movies yet? Many feel the answer to that question can be answered by Bonelli's experience with the film adaptation of his other best-selling title, *Tex*. Duccio Tessari directed a film version, starring Giuliano Gemma as the adult western hero, but it was a critical and boxoffice flop. So too was Claudio Argento's production of another Tiziano Scavi project (unrelated to *Dylan Dog*), the surreal black comedy *NERO*, directed by Giancarlo Soldi. And although Bonelli sold the *Dylan Dog* television rights to director Alberto Negrin, the proposed 12-episode series has yet to materialize. Could such (possibly low-grade) spin-offs kill the goose that laid the golden egg. Perhaps. With *Tundra*, the *TEEN-AGE MUTANT NINJA TUR-*

continued on page 61

Argento's *TRAUMA*, "One sequence I do regret losing is where Francesco vomited up a creature in the form of a question mark. This was considered too fantastic by everyone, even though Scavi said my script was better than his book. I had to make cuts because of production costs, too. I originally hated Francesco's cemetery near a big lake, but that meant expensive set construction and was also written out."

DELLAMORTE DELLA-MORTE's \$4 million budget was eventually raised through a five-company consortium of Audifilm, Urania Film ("Who acted as our executive producers because we had no real experience," added Corsi), KG Productions (the French company owned by director Costa-Gavras' wife Michele), Bibofilm & TV (a German special visual effects house who handled all the optical chores as a result) and Reteitalia (who bought the Italian TV rights). It was filmed in seven weeks during the Fall of 1993 on location at an actual cemetery outside Orvieto, in the Umbria province, and interiors were completed back in Rome's Kinopolis Studios (the former Dinocitta, once producer Charles Band's Italian Empire headquarters).

Those expecting elaborately angled set pieces from Soavi in the tradition of his mentor, Dario Argento, will not be visually disappointed by *DELLAMORTE DELLA-MORTE*. One of the more complex set-ups involved Everett shooting a constant stream of Returners in the

Gnaghi (Francis Hadji Lazaro), with his girlfriend's severed head.



COMICS SHORTCUTS

“I’m going for the full comic strip look,” said Soavi. “I didn’t use storyboards. I cut out panels from the Dylan Dog comic and strung them together for inspiration.”

head as they shuffled past his doorway and the camera pulling back the entire length of the cemetery so his final bullet neatly broke the wings of a tombstone angel. “I’m going for the full comic strip look,” said Soavi. “I didn’t use storyboards. I cut out individual panels from the Dylan Dog comic and strung them together for visual inspiration. The framing, the shadows and the lighting are of the utmost importance. The photography [by Mauro Marchetti] is highlighting subtleties for a more magical feel. I’ve never done anything remotely like this before. Nor will anyone have seen anything like it. I’ve felt the owner of a new language—one I’m using to give space to the dramatic sentiments in what is basically a black fable about today’s Blank Generation.”

Such subtext was vital to Rupert Everett. He wouldn’t have acted in the movie if it hadn’t been present. “I hate horror movies for the simple reason they don’t have stories,” said the actor. “Nothing usually makes any sense and they bore me because they are all about events not character. DEL-LAMORTE DELLAMORE is more an ironic *roman a clef* us-

Soavi has Gnaghi preserve the head as a shrine in his shattered TV set.

ing the horror film structure as a springboard. It’s as much a Walt Disney cartoon as anything else, the flippant humor making it even harder to categorize. Francesco could just as easily be a banker as a grave digger.”

Added Everett, “The movie begins normally, but then becomes a morality play as it seizes into a neon-lit portrait of a serial killer. Death here means emotional death, pop-arted into a mad, psychedelic fantasy. In my mind, Soavi’s story is how he sees contemporary life in Italy: the people, the governmental betrayal, the mafia scandals, the bleak future. The Living Dead/Returners are us in effect because we’ve all become so boring, so cauterized, so politically correct. What the movie says is there is no such thing as normal. You must just grasp what life throws at you. In Francesco’s case he goes from being a killer of the dead to a killer of the living because he becomes so emotionally zapped by the same woman in different disguises.” Co-starring alongside Everett as the three incarnations of Francesco’s ideal lover is supermodel Anna Falchi. French pop star Francois Hadji-Lazaro plays his trusted dumb helper Gnaghi, or as Soavi described him, “Sancho Panza to Francesco’s Don Quixote.” Also in the cast is Barbara Cupisti who starred in Soavi’s debut feature STAGE-FRONT and THE CHURCH. Naturally, the one major DEL-LAMORTE DELLAMORE challenge was devising a different zombie look without resorting to romero cliché. To overcome this, Soavi went back to his roots, literally.

“I’m tied to nature and the environment in my soul,” said Soavi. “Francesco has a similar rapport with the earth mainly because gravedigging is obviously that sort of job; he always



A spade in the head has no effect, only a bullet in the forehead can kill a “Returner.” Soavi’s \$4 million production has been a runaway hit in Italy.

gets his hands and boots dirty burying the corpses. I wondered how I could poetically connect the dead bodies to the earth and it came to me when I figured they could take their energy from plant roots. So when they rise up, the dead are scarred by root remains.”

The special makeup effects were realized by Sergio (DEMONS) Stivaletti and his six-man team. Stivaletti’s tasks included a fully functional severed head, assorted bite marks, bullet wounds and a mechanical winged Returner (a stylistic nod to the specter of death in THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN, which Soavi worked on, as Terry Gilliam’s second unit director).

Although Soavi feels DEL-LAMORTE DELLAMORE has some connections with THE DEVIL’S DAUGHTER on the

cerebral level, he ultimately sees it as a complete twist on the usual pasta gore fare. “It doesn’t focus on scares, shocks, a killer or the murders,” said Soavi. “The tension is built more towards the arrival at a caress, perhaps even a kiss, than bloody slaughter. Francesco isn’t scared of the Returners. They’re a routine part of his job and each dispatch is quick and to the point. No, he’s scared of love, commitment, disappointment, the impossible dream and the living who make unreasonable demands on his valuable time. That’s the out-of-step atmosphere which is making this so hard to direct. It’s all about opposites. Mainly it’s a horror movie for people who never see them, like Rupert, in fact. And as such it could be the horror movie to end all horror movies.” □

Soavi (l) directs Anna Falchi and Rupert Everett on the Orvieto cemetery location, per Soavi “a horror movie for those who never see horror movies.”



NIGHT SWARM

Michigan effects experts use wits to mount their own.

By Sue Uram

Gary Jones, Detroit's veteran effects master of movies such as *EVIL DEAD*, *WENDIGO*, *MOON-TRAP*, *ARMY OF DARKNESS* and Jean-Claude Van Damme's *HARD TARGET*, has mounted his own production—with a little help from his friends. Jones teamed up with co-writers Tom Chaney (*WENDIGO*) and Steve Hodge to create *NIGHT SWARM*, a movie about giant blood-sucking mosquitoes from—where else—northern Michigan. Jones developed the film over a period of six years, first as *SKEETER*, then as *BLOOD SWARM*, its shooting title during filming last year.

Richard "Jake" Jacobson served as visual effects supervisor and came up with a studio site for interiors. Nestled quietly in an unpretentious corner of Detroit, Jacobson's Steele Rule and Dye, is an abandoned family dyemaking company, transformed into a working movie studio under Jones' direction. Two-thirds of the movie was shot on various outdoor locations in Michigan. The remaining third was shot in the converted warehouse.

Jacobson, another Michigan



Gunnar Hansen, star of *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE*, menaces Rachel Loisel, in a backwoods story about giant killer mosquitos.

effects veteran, spent six months designing a motion-control device used in *BATMAN RETURNS* which resulted in a 42-second on-screen sequence where the camera is seen to swoop across the street, over a fence and into the abandoned zoo home of the Penguin. Jacobson got no screen credit for building what was the largest motion-control device ever seen in Hollywood, which worked on a single take. For *NIGHT SWARM*, Jacobson rigged the

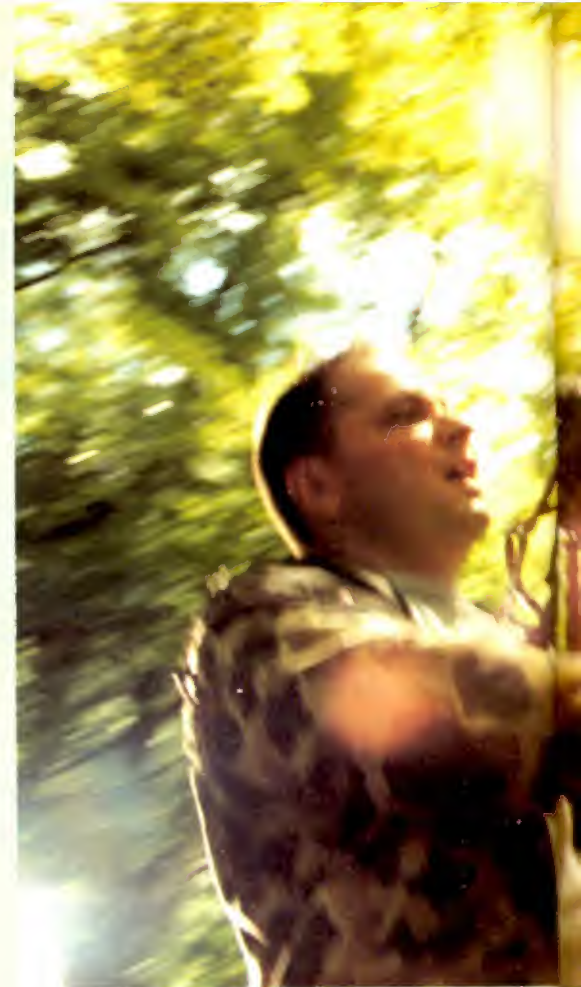
mammoth bugs that take wing, working with Jones' 12-inch to five-foot-long puppets. Jacobson used ultra thin test line, painted flat black and rendered virtually invisible to the camera. A tiny motor powered the bugs along the lines and made their huge wings flap.

"The wings spin when the mosquitoes are flying," said Jacobson, "and flap when they land on a person or target. I based this wing movement on the way vultures fly." Affectionately referred to as the "Boom of Doom," during filming, Jacobson's mosquito rig was a three-day, \$300 project, that worked on the first take.

Chaney, Jones' co-writer, also served as chief cameraman and provided use of his Jackson home as

the location for a farmhouse sequence. Dave Thiry, 35, and Eric Pascarelli, 27, served as producers of the joint venture with Jones, and raised the budget, not disclosed, as a limited partnership from private Michigan investors.

Jones masterminded the giant bugs and directed, as a student of fellow Detroitter Sam Raimi's class of "cutting corners." Tom Ludwig, an Oakland college professor of film study, doubled as film editor. "Most of



John Reneaud comes under attack.

the crew are students from the University of Michigan, working for the experience," said Jones. "They get a chance to perform hands-on techniques which they have only seen in Hollywood productions."

Jones cast Rachel Loisel, 23, a local actress mostly in stage productions, to play the youthful heroine. Ron Asheton, former guitarist with Iggy Pop and the Stooges, and a veteran of *WENDIGO*, plays a doomed park ranger. Gunnar Hansen, 46, best known for his work as Leatherface in *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE*, stars as a chainsaw-wielding backwoods bully. "Gunnar is an Icelandic name in origin," said Hansen, a huge, overwhelming

Lining up a shot with the mosquito rig, dubbed "the boom of doom."





Latex and fiberglass bugs by Acme Effects ranged from one to over three feet.

presence on screen, who often surprises fans at conventions with his easy manner and highly articulate conversation.

Disillusioned by the Hollywood scene, Hansen has given up acting for the most part for a career as a magazine writer. Hansen is the author of two books, *Islands at the Edge of Time*, and an investigative look at the Texas death row inmate Henry Lee Lucas, a confessed serial killer/necrophile, accused of killing his mother, teenaged wife, and 600 other people in the late '60s. "I felt if I were to struggle along at something for several years, it would be more important for me to be a writer," he said.

On any movie set, Hansen

Effects supervisor Jake Jacobson (l) and director Gary Jones (r) on set.



would be considered a "presence." Standing at a height of about six-feet, six-inches tall with his silver ponytail trailing down his back, he is a giant with a heart of gold. Although retired from acting for the past 20 years, Hansen decided to accept Jones' offer to play an escaped bank robber in *NIGHT SWARM*. "I had been getting a bunch of scripts," said Hansen. "This was the third I received within three days and I enjoyed it from the beginning."

Hansen noted how he dreaded filming the scene in the farmhouse where he is trapped by huge mosquitoes and wields a chainsaw to defeat his nemesis. The four-foot long chainsaw was used to cut through the door to allow his escape. "The lighting came through the door just right and I knew we had a great shot," said Hansen.

Jones' mosquitoes seemed alive on camera. He started sculpting the monsters about two and a half years ago. Production on the movie started in early 1983 with the live shooting taking place in the summer. Post-production wrapped up at the end of last year, with the film offered to prospective distributors at the American Film Market in Los Angeles earlier this year. The world premiere was planned for Michigan's Mt. Clemens Drive-In in July.

The smallest bug is about 12

"We are playing it straight, not campy," said director Gary Jones. "We are using vivid colors and patterning it after a '50s type of horror flick."

inches and the largest is three and a half feet, made of latex and fiberglass with several versions—flying bugs, landing bugs and fully mechanical bugs for the close shots. Jones maintained a tradition of placing whatever the crew had for lunch into bugs slated for demolition along with blood, iced tea and vinyl guts—debris left over from his Acme effects productions from the past ten years.

"We are playing it straight," said Jones. "We are using vivid colors and patterning the film after a '50s type horror flick. It's not campy and not out-and-out comedy, more along the lines of *TREMORS*, where there is humor in the script. When the bugs are in the scene, it is pure terror."

The premise revolves around an alien space ship that crashes into the northern Michigan woods where ravenous mosquitoes feast on the blood of the dead. As a result, the bugs grow to huge proportions and suck the life out of anything moving. The characters stumble on what is left of a campground after the bug attack and proceed to do battle with the Jurassic-sized

mosquitoes. Along the way, they pick up a scientist in search of the meteor crash who aids in their fight.

"When you have no money, you have to be more creative," said Jones. "Like, do we have that one roll of film left to shoot a scene? In larger budgeted movies, every set is built in full detail, whether they use it or not. Here, we have to determine if we are actually going to see in a closet or to the top of the stairs. If the camera will not see it, we don't build it. The key to shooting a low-budget film is determining mechanics of the live-action shots and building whatever set dressing you absolutely need to make the scene complete."

The attitude on the set was light. The crew was having a ball, brimming with enthusiasm, which Jones hoped would carry over into the film and be contagious to the viewing audiences. Keeping close watch on the violence, Jones planned to seek a PG-13 rating. There is no gratuitous sex or violence, but some foul language.

"I think the movie is going to

continued on page 61

Jones (l) who heads Acme Effects, makes his directing debut, working with Hansen (r). "When you have no money, you have to be creative," said Jones.





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FILM RATINGS

- Must See
- Excellent
- Good
- Mediocre
- Poor

BIRDS II: LAND'S END

Directed by Alan Smithee. Showtime. 4/94, 77 mins. With: Brad Johnson, Chelsea Field, Jan Rubes.

Birds abound here, not as a harbinger of apocalypse, but like a massive group of unpaid extras, patiently awaiting their cue. Under bird trainer Gary Gero's expert tutelage, they respond well to all of them, and the bird effects are, in general, effective. But if the birds don't have a clue why they're here, we're a little too aware. Alfred Hitchcock maintained a purposeful ambiguity in the original, suggesting the birds might have represented a Biblical apocalypse or an evolutionary nightmare. Here the little squawkers haven't come to scare us, but to present a lecture, a very proper and predictable one about cleaning up the environment.

The human characters enact a drama that's like a watered-down version of a Stephen King novel; the husband on pause after the death of his son, the wife rather passively humoring a flirtatious employer, the anxiety of both seeming to fuel the birds' flights, while their preteen daughters and the other occupants of the fictional Outer Banks peninsula suffer the myopic stupidity of the JAWS-like town officials. The conclusion is inescapable: only families that plug into their TV and gather their politically correct members together to watch circumscribed TV dramas are safe from the scourge of paranoid imagination. If only Hitchcock had known! How much easier his life might have been.

● James M. Fuller

BODY MELT

Directed by Phillip Brody. Prism Entertainment. 5/94, 82 mins. With: Gerard Kennedy, Andrew Dado, Ian Smith, Regina Galgala.

An Australian version of STREET TRASH (1987), except instead of rotgut whiskey accidentally causing the homeless to explode, this time it's greedy entrepreneurs deliberately distributing untested vitamins. These capsules first make you hallucinate and then have a "glandular" reaction. Glandular covers a lot of territory, but in one instance, a horny muscleman's penis explodes.

There's a lot of cross cutting among three interrelated plot lines. One is the health spa where the "vitamins" are being distributed, another is the nearby community whose ordinary citizens have been unknowing guinea pigs, and the third is sort of a side trip to THE HILLS HAVE EYES territory, consisting of a feeble-minded, deformed family who kill kangaroos to eat their fresh adrenal glands.

Eventually all these plot lines converge, leaving very few of the cast remaining. Special makeup effects by Bob McCarron are properly disgusting, particularly a late term pregnancy that self



Karen Black as a sexy vampire in CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT, makeup by the KNB Efx Group for a lackluster film produced by Fangoria magazine in 1991.

destructs. It's nowhere near as enjoyable, funny or well-constructed as anything from New Zealander Peter Jackson, to whom co-scripter/director Philip Brophy has been compared.

● Judith P. Harris

BRAINSCAN

Directed by John Flynn. Triumph Releasing. 4/94, 96 mins. With: Edward Furlong, Amy Hargreaves and T. Ryder Smith.

Maybe Tim Burton could have done something with Michael (Edward Furlong), a self-absorbed Montreal teenager living in the kind of solitary gloom that provoked repeated thoughts of suicide in HAROLD AND MAUDE. Director John Flynn and screenwriter Andrew Kevin Walker make an ambitious attempt to meld a poignant drama of teenage loneliness and angst with a provocative technothriller on the theme of dream vs. reality. Edward Furlong and Amy Hargreaves have understated appeal as the two teenage leads. But the character of the Trickster, despite a pull-out-the-stops performance by stage star T. Ryder Smith, is not the charismatic standout the filmmakers intend. He's less a successor to Freddie Krueger than a secondhand cross between the Joker and Howard Stern, saddled with grade-Z one-liners.

The crucial flaw in the film, though, is its attempt to make its dream vs. reality premise provocative by assembling the film in a deliberately confusing manner, leaving loose ends dangling without discrimination. The result is a film that's less provocative than oblique, more muted than poignant.

● James M. Fuller

CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT

Directed by Tony Randel. Showtime (cable TV). 5/94, 89 mins. With: Karen Black, Peter DeLuise, Ami Dolenz, Evan MacKenzie

This lackluster effort, produced by Fangoria magazine back in 1991, is of interest chiefly for an early look at Ami

Dolenz before she acquired blond hair. She's a teenager who is enticed into a seemingly harmless ritual, a dip in the proverbial haunted pool, before she leaves for college. She loses her cross during this swim, and while this makes no sense at all, it touches something underwater which brings back to life a vampire who has been interred there for decades. Soon, everyone in town is a vampire, but only after hours. If only the head vampire can be defeated, everything will go back to normal. Yeah, right.

Peter DeLuise is roped into saving the town. First he rescues Dolenz, and then both of them are rescued by the town drunk, played by Garrett Morris, who had a similar role in another made-in-Wisconsin Fangoria production, SEVERED TIES, which at least got a video release. Karen Black plays a vampire in surprisingly unattractive makeup. By day she lives in a cocoon which she exudes from her mouth, an interesting, if brief KNB effects sequence. The vampires' victims, alive all these years, exist underwater by vomiting up their lungs which are attached to their mouths externally. When they emerge from the water, they reswallow them, a sequence which is suggested and mercifully not shown.

● Judith P. Harris

FULL ECLIPSE

Directed by Anthony Hickox. HBO Video (video). 5/94, 96 mins. With: Mario van Peebles, Patsy Kensit, Bruce Payne.

Fantasy specialist Anthony Hickox turns in another slick job, this time a twist on the werewolf genre. L.A.P.D. detective Mario van Peebles is mystified when his moribund partner makes a miraculous recovery and turns into a superhuman crimebuster. Eventually, van Peebles is recruited by a police death squad, headed by Bruce Payne and including the perky blonde Patsy Kensit. A "serum" developed by Payne

turns the team into crook-killing werewolves, but eventually Payne's scheme begins to degenerate. Adequate special effects and makeup enhance, but don't overwhelm the plot, although Payne's final form—a big werewolf—isn't executed as flawlessly as it needed to be (a combination of puppet and man-in-suit, with lots of shot cuts to obscure what's *not* being shown). Aside from the confusing and unsatisfactory ending, a generally well-done and entertaining film.

●● David Wilt

A GNOME NAMED GNORM

Directed by Stan Winston. Polygram (video). 4/94, 85 mins. With: Anthony Michael Hall, Jerry Orbach, Claudia Christian, Eli Danker.

An excruciatingly cute follow-up by Stan Winston to his directorial debut with the relentlessly bleak PUMPKINHEAD. A pre-steroid Anthony Michael Hall plays a geeky undercover detective who screws up a sting operation, the only witness to which turns out to be a gnome. This character, called Gnorm, looks like an oversized escapee from THE DARK CRYSTAL, and is a lot less believable as a real character than any of the Muppets.

The film is surprisingly violent—even the puppet gets the stuffing knocked out of him—in a mean-spirited manner sure to upset the film's target audience of tiny tots. Jerry Orbach lends a much needed note of professionalism to the thankless role of a cop gone bad.

In the unlikely event you seek this out on the shelves of your video store, look for it under "A" because the title on the box is THE ADVENTURES OF A GNOME NAMED GNORM. It was filmed as UPWORLD in 1988 and has been understandably on the shelf ever since.

● Judith P. Harris

Director Anthony Hickox with a full figure werewolf by Alterian Studios for the TV-movie FULL ECLIPSE.



LEPRECHAUN 2

Directed by Rodman Flender. Trimark. 4/94. With Warwick Davis, Shevonne Durkin, Charlie Heath.

The idea of using a leprechaun as the main character in a series of horror films is a problematic one. The creature is more the stuff of charming folktales than horrifying nightmares. Thus, the filmmakers are forced to straddle the fence, making one type of film for the horror audience and another, more traditional one, for those who prefer comforting, rather than disturbing, genre films. The best scene in the film has the wee goblin put a spell on a girl's boyfriend to make him think that two motor-driven propellers are the girl's breasts, which owes more to the NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET series than to Irish myth and magic. Other dramatic pitfalls abound. According to the structure the filmmakers have chosen to use, the leprechaun must ultimately be seen in an unsympathetic light. But in traditional folklore, the most prominent transgression is the avarice of those who would try to snatch the sylvan elf's pot o' gold. What few moments such characters now have in the plot is strictly marginal; most of the dramatic weight is given to a sodden menagerie of mediocre bumblers, whose involvement in the greedy exchange is strictly accidental. The screenwriters attempt to resolve this problem by introducing the concept of the endangered virgin, a bit of lore not mentioned, as far as I can tell, in any of the traditional tales. They haven't however, imagined characters whose endangerment might have produced some sense of urgency. Despite the charmingly spirited malevolence of Warwick Davis as the titular elf, like the leprechaun, the filmmakers don't

Director Dario Argento sets up a tracking shot on lead Christopher Rydell in TRAUMA, not up to snuff.



Warwick Davis as the titular demon in LEPRECHAUN 2, one of the few bright spots in a threadbare franchise wannabe that failed to find its pot o' gold.

seem interested in much besides their pot o' gold; unlike him, however, they are probably not clever enough to get even that.

● James M. Faller

NEMESIS

Directed by Albert Pyun. Showtime (cable TV). 94 mins. With Olivier Gruner, Tim Thomerson, Cary-Hirokyu Tagawa, Merle Kennedy.

In case you don't read the "trades," there was a big hoopla in recent years about the \$1 million price paid for a spec script called THE TICKING MAN which, as it turns out, was never actually filmed. The central idea of THE TICKING MAN was a race against the clock by someone with a bomb inside him. The idea shows up here, along with those from other recognizable sources. The most obvious "inspiration" is THE TERMINATOR. Almost every character is either a cyborg or a passing-for-human automaton.

The overly complicated plot has to do with a terrorist group trying to pass a microchip to another terrorist group to prove or disrupt someone's plans to replace all humans and cyborgs with total machine people. If you can stick through to the end, this replacement might seem a good idea to you. Olivier Gruner, with his piggy, close eyes and bizarre hair styles, plays a cyborg cop who gets mixed up in this messy plot. He has all the charisma of cardboard and a bit of an accent as well. Between Gruner and heavy Brion James, who has chosen to use a sort of Nazi accent, vary little of the dialogue is comprehensible. Abandoning his heroic roles in those awful Charles Band films, Tim Thomerson plays the villain.

One of the notable TERMINATOR rip-offs...er, homages is Thomerson being destroyed down to his robotic skeleton, yet continuing to fight (via go motion animation, decent but poorly composited). The makeup effects by

David P. Barton certainly seem inspired by Rob Bottin's work in TOTAL RECALL. The most irritating element of the F-word-filled film is the monotonous narration by Marjorie Monaghan who exists for most of the plot on the screen of a palm top computer.

I searched my memory banks for a film directed by Albert Pyun I liked, but failed to access any, including this entry.

● Judith P. Harris

RETURN TO THE LOST WORLD

Directed by Timothy Bond. Worldvision Home Video. 4/94, 93 mins. With: John Rhys Davies, David Warner, Eric McCormack, Nathania Stanford.

Producer Harry Allen Towers has apparently come up with two films based on the Professor Challenger character created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. I say "apparently" because only the sequel RETURN TO THE LOST WORLD has been released to video. However, judging from a trailer which precedes it, THE LOST WORLD was also remade back-to-back with the same cast.

Aimed at children, the sequel is more like an elongated episode of TV's LAND OF THE LOST, with another adorable puppet baby dinosaur. The TV series, with stop-motion animation by the Chiado Brothers, had far better dinosaurs than this lackluster effort. Except for two mechanical creatures with limited movement, the dinosaurs here never actually appear in the same frame as the actors and are pretty much kept off-screen for most of the running time. Instead, there's a dull plot about ruthless Belgians out to destroy the Lost World and the last living dinosaurs to drill for oil on an inaccessible African plateau. It hardly seems believable that these same greedy men wouldn't want to exploit the dinosaurs rather than destroy them. Professors Challenger

(John Rhys-Davis) and Summerlee (David Warner) are called back to help the native tribe who lives in peace with the dinosaurs, and easily scare away the Belgians only to be expected to quell a volcano caused by their drilling. Much narrative reference, to little effect, is made to the previous film. This one is so dull, it hardly bears contemplation how excruciating the previous one must have been. Made in Zimbabwe in 1992.

○ Judith P. Harris

SKEETER

Directed by Clark Brandon. New Line Home Video. 4/94, 95 mins. With: Tracy Griffith, Jim Youngs, Charles Napier, Jay Robinson.

Although this boasts the dumbest, most unconvincing threat since THE GIANT CLAW, the sight of these oversized mutated mosquitoes is not enough to keep your eyes open during this slow-paced ecological warning. Set in a dying Western town where people and cattle are well one day and dead the next, the townspeople are bafflingly hostile to a scientist (William Sanderson) called in by one of the town deputies (Jim Youngs) to test the water. He collects a lot of samples and looks grave, but no explanation is ever offered for the pesky insects which, thoughtfully, only swarm at night. The big bugs are so laughable, they are certainly the lesser of two evils compared to the corrupt sheriff (Charles Napier) and the greedy land developer who are apparently aware of what is going on and do nothing to defend the town. Michael J. Pollard turns up as the town looney who keeps a couple of the giant mosquitoes as pets, feeding them with his own blood, a la LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS.

○ Judith P. Harris

TRAUMA

Directed by Dario Argento. Worldvision Home Video. 3/94, 105 mins. With: Christopher Rydell, Asia Argento, James Russo, Laura Johnson.

Dario Argento has not had much luck getting his film distributed in the U.S. His last one, TWO EVIL EYES, was delayed by several years, but at least was released theatrically. This, his latest effort, made in 1992, which led to the bankruptcy of his Italian production company, has gone straight to video and, sadly, doesn't even deserve that platform.

The plot is as baffling as all of Argento's scripts, but this time there are none of the interesting camera angles, tension-provoking music or wonderfully visual setpieces which characterized his earlier films and which now seem attributable to his cameramen.

In the R-rated video, Tom Savini's gore makeups have been excised, and the killings are shot in such closeup, it's difficult to know what's going on. The two leads, played by Argento's daughter, Asia, and Marc Rydell's son, Christopher, are especially lackluster and Asia's English is often incomprehensible. Only Brad Dourif (whose name doesn't even appear in the opening credits) in a very brief cameo manages to show any energy.

○ Judith P. Harris

VE NEIL

continued from page 29

lines. But his downcast eyes showed off his eyeshadow really well."

Neil screened Ed Wood's films prior to ED WOOD's start of production, while she was toiling on MRS. DOUBTFIRE, for which she won an Academy Award earlier this year. She feels the cult director's boyish enthusiasm for filmmaking is one of the keys to ED WOOD.

"We watched Ed Wood's films on MRS. DOUBTFIRE," said Neil. "As a matter of fact, Robin watched them with us. They do have a certain charm to them. It's as if a little kid made them. It felt like he [Wood] was just so happy to be making movies. And I think Johnny Depp is doing a great job bringing that light and childlike quality to the character. Not knowing Ed Wood myself, I don't know if this film is glorifying him or not—for all I know he was a demented pervert who made movies. But Johnny's bringing a very childlike quality to the role. And maybe Wood was both, who knows? I mean, obviously later in life he got into some pretty strange things." □

HOLLYWOOD RAT RACE

continued from page 39

a section of this book, in which he warns actors to steer clear of just such fringe industry activity. Despite its DAY OF THE LOCUST-like atmosphere, Wood's message to the hopefuls finally emerges as another loud, gutsy, idiosyncratic statement from a misguided dreamer with far more juvenile love of movies than any talent for making them. *The Hollywood Rat Race* is a truly bizarre work, and, quite wonderfully, contains within itself a wistful and perfect assertion of its *raison d'être*, stated in absolutely textbook Wood-ese: "Nothing is stranger than the strange itself. And there is no place else in the world stranger than MY tinsel town of Hollywood." Amen to that. □

VAMPIRA

continued from page 41

I'm an artist, and Vampira is a character who I created, who endures. People want to do interviews, 'Vampira: Then and Now.' There is no 'Then and Now.' She never changes any more than Mickey Mouse does. I change, but she doesn't. When someone plays her beautifully, as in *The Damned's* video, I'm flattered. It's when they steal my entire livelihood that I don't like it, or if they do a bad representation." Nurmi's character was also im-

mortalized by The Misfits' song "Vampira," on their *Walk Among Us* disc.

Nurmi remains unimpressed by most of Hollywood's genre offerings today, and admits she doesn't go to the movies or even have cable-TV. "If I were young and an actress now, I would never do any nudity," she said. "Never, ever, not for a million dollars because I'm old-fashioned. However, I love sensuousness, I love a wholesome eroticism; I worship Madonna because she's a highly sensuous being, as I am. Sensuality does not mean carnal vulgarity. You can be very, very hot, without taking your clothes off. Of course, you can also take them off, and be provocative and pleasant, and not be crude. God knows we have a lot of crudeness today." □

FUMETTI INSPIRATION

continued from page 54

TLE people, set to publish Dylan dog stateside under the name Damian Darke, the financial investments are enormous. If Dylan Dog has to become a TV/movie hero, he must be as successful as JAMES BOND or BATMAN, not sink without a trace like HOWARD THE DUCK or THE ROCKETEER. Which is why all eyes are on the highly anticipated Italian opening of Michele Soavi's DELLA-MORTE DELLAMORE and Rupert Everett's maiden turn as Dylan Dog by proxy. □

DARK HORIZON

continued from page 50

interesting. For white Americans like us to have the experience of being treated very harshly because of the way we look was important in creating these characters. To really get that in our bones."

Treas sees science fiction as a way to discuss issues as you can't in conventional drama. "We've addressed a lot of things about sexuality between men and women, equality between men and women, about racial fascism. Very rich themes. That's why everybody keeps coming back. That's why the audience keeps coming back." □

NIGHT SWARM

continued from page 55

be really good and that there might be call for a sequel," said Hansen. "But I have a problem with this notion of sequels. It suggests a true poverty of ideas, of being terrified of trying a new idea. Too often filmmakers bank on an old idea, which is what happened with TEXAS CHAINSAW 3—they banked an old idea and drove it into the ground." □

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LETTERS

STARTLING STAR CHILD

I very much enjoyed your June 1994 retrospect on 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY [25:3:32]. I first saw the film with my parents when I was 13 years old. I had asked to see it as an already long-time fan of our nation's young space program and a new reader of science fiction. I remember yelping in astonishment when Dave Bowman appeared at the film's finale as the Star-Child; that yelp awakened my sleeping parents. Viewing that scene startles me to this day.

The side bar description of Stanley Kubrick's A.I. made me try to think of a source novel, knowing his penchant for adapting literature to the screen. Recent works of science fiction and fact came first to mind, until I remembered a favorite of a college professor that became a reading assignment: Arthur C. Clarke's 1953 novel, *The City and the Stars*. It's worth rereading.

"Infinity himself" he may be, but Kubrick wants each of us to play him in a game of chess. We already know how good he really is at it.

John C. Fraraccio
Brick, New Jersey 08723

EXORCISING BERNARD HERRMANN

Having just read your June issue with the 2001 retrospect, I felt compelled to point out an error in Randall Larson's article on the music of composer Alex North [25:3:40]. Larson mentions that North's score was not the first to be excised from the final cut of the film. He mentions Bernard Herrmann who supposedly had a score rejected for *THE EXORCIST*. According to Steven C. Smith's Herrmann biography, *A Heart at Fire's Center*, Herrmann never wrote *THE EXORCIST* score. Quoting from Smith's book:

"...young filmmakers, in America and abroad, were discovering Herrmann's work. Among them was another of the young New York directors whose work was changing the business: brash and talented William Friedkin had scored a popular and critical success with *THE FRENCH CONNECTION* and was completing his screen version of William Peter Blatty's novel *THE EXORCIST*

when he saw *SISTERS*. Friedkin decided Herrmann was perfect for his film and the two men met in New York. The outcome is best documented in a series of recollections that begins with Friedkin:

"(Herrmann) flew in from England; I showed him the rough cut and he loved the picture, and he wanted to do it, except he said he would not work in California. He didn't like California's musicians. He didn't want to work in Hollywood. He had been through all that and to hell with it. He had to record it in London and he had to get St. Giles Church which has the greatest sound in there. I thought that was a marvellous idea if I had six months to finish the movie and let him just mail me a score. But I was making changes in the picture throughout...and I wanted to dub the picture (in New York) because I love the facilities here...I couldn't be in London and here, so I had to not use Bernard Herrmann. I didn't know who the hell to use then."

Friedkin's remarks, published in Elmer Bernstein's magazine *Filmmusic Notebook* in late 1974, prompted a reply by Christopher Palmer, writing on the ailing Herrmann's behalf:

"In the first place, Herrmann hated the film and never really wanted to do it. Second, Friedkin wanted credit as co-composer and musical director and a share in the music royalties; the idea was that Herrmann should call upon Friedkin with his previous day's work, play it over for him and then Friedkin would do his thing—which...would no doubt have led to some very interesting results. Third, Herrmann never made any such disparaging remarks about Los Angeles musicians; he wanted to record in St. Giles Cripplegate, London, because of the peculiar acoustic there and because he wanted its pipe organ. William Friedkin objected to this on the grounds that he didn't want any 'Catholic' music in his film."

"It was a very quick decision," Laurie Johnson recalled. "It was all resolved within one afternoon. Benny returned to London, and as we sat in the sun at my home, he said, 'It's too tough—I don't want to touch it.' That was it; there was no further discussion about it."

Finally, director Larry Cohen: "Friedkin said to Benny, 'I want you to give me a better score than

you wrote for *CITIZEN KANE*.' Benny replied, 'Well, why didn't ya make a better picture than *CITIZEN KANE*?' and walked out of the screening room..."

This excerpt from pages 330-331 clearly shows that Herrmann never wrote a score for *THE EXORCIST*, even if we do not know the reason for certain. The entire excerpt is riddled with notes of bibliography, so one can verify each and every quotation.

If Mr. Larson had wanted to stick to Herrmann, he could and perhaps should have mentioned the *TORN CURTAIN* score that Herrmann did for Hitchcock's film. Hitchcock discarded this score in favor of John Addison's lackluster score and at the same time caused the rift between the director and the composer, that kept them apart for the rest of their lives.

Rene van Os
The Netherlands

STRANGELOVE'S BAD JOKE

Dan Person's article on Ray Lovejoy and post-production on 2001 [25:3:44] implied that the only reason *DR. STRANGELOVE* was delayed from its November, 1963 release and released, instead, in February, 1964 was because the nation's somber mood following the assassination of John F. Kennedy might hurt the film's commercial chances.

A careful viewing of one of the scenes from *DR. STRANGELOVE* shows another reason—a post-production reason, in fact—for the film's delayed release. In the scene, Slim Pickens' character is reading aloud the contents of his flight crew's survival kits, and ends the scene by saying: "Shoot, a fellow could have a pretty good time in Vegas with all that stuff." Look closely—his voice says "Vegas" but his lips say "Dallas."

Shawn Watson
Arlington, TX 76012

STRANGLING STAR TREK

Did the advent of *DEEP SPACE NINE* damage the quality of *THE NEXT GENERATION* episodes? Consider the evidence:

1. Season five of TNG had six episodes filmed outdoors (if you count the brief "Inner Light" scene) and yet season six had only three episodes filmed outdoors due

to budget cuts.

2. A microwave link between the special effects facility and the soundstage was stopped in season six to save money.

3. Instead of getting new talent for DS9, *THE NEXT GENERATION* series was raided of some of its best talent which is an appalling thing to do to a successful series.

4. A proposed episode of TNG called "The Storyteller" was taken for DS9 even though season six of TNG was struggling for scripts.

5. Extra two-parters were filmed season six on TNG purely to save money.

6. The DS9 budget was several hundred thousand dollars more than the TNG budget—hardly fair after its success as a series.

Among the might-have beens, imagine if "The Chase" had been filmed outdoors as it should have been. Imagine if "Starship Mine" had been helmed by the series' best action director, David Livingston, how good it could have been (and what a loss he was).

But with season five episodes like "Darmock," "The Inner Light," "Power Play," "Unification," etc. don't kid yourself that season six or seven is as good. As Jonathan Frakes was quoted as saying, "The money's being spent across the street."

R. Wilson
West Australia

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